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**Looking Beyond Poverty: Poor Children's Perspectives and Experiences  
of Risk, Coping, and Resilience in Addis Ababa**

**Bethlehem Tekola Gebru**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Bath**

**Department of Psychology**

**September 2009**

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Bethlehem Tekola

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## **Abstract**

Despite the increasing policy and academic attention given to child poverty in recent years, little is known about children's perspectives and their experiences of risk, coping and resilience in the context of poverty. The existing child poverty literature is dominated by studies from economics and developmental psychology, which for the most part overlook not only the perspectives of children in poverty but also their use of coping strategies and experiences of resilience. Much can be inferred, however, from studies of the lives of children in developing countries in terms of the active role poor children play in their lives and their families' lives. Additionally, a small but growing number of qualitative child poverty studies in Europe and North America (e.g. Ridge, 2002) have highlighted the resourcefulness and optimism of many children living in poverty. They have shown the merit of prioritizing children's perspectives and experiences or minimally setting them alongside the perspectives of adults in order to understand their lives and concerns fully. This thesis builds on these studies by exploring the lives of children living in poverty that go beyond their material disadvantage or survival. It highlights the priorities, concerns and responses of children living in a context different from the one covered by most of these studies. It also explores the theoretical concepts of coping and resilience to establish whether these constructs can be reliably applied in a society that is very different from the one in which they were developed.

The study focuses on Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world. It addresses the perspectives and experiences of twenty-six children (11 girls and 15 boys) between the ages of 11 and 14 in Kolfe area, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa. It employs qualitative research methods such as semi-structured individual interviews, daily diaries, drawings and timelines with the children. The key finding of the study is that the majority of these children perceive that relationships that are characterized by conflict are more damaging than material poverty. This suggests that research and interventions focusing on poverty not only undermine children's positive experiences and agency but also obscure their real priorities and concerns. The children's accounts further suggest that the theoretical concepts of "coping" and "resilience" are applicable to Ethiopian children, although as in other contexts how the children understand and experience them is influenced by the culture and environment in which they live.

**Keywords:** Child poverty, children's perspectives, risk, coping, resilience, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

## **List of abbreviations**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
<b>BA</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>CYRM</b>	The Child and Youth Resilience Measure
<b>EC</b>	Ethiopian Calendar
<b>ESRC</b>	Economic and Social Research Council
<b>HICES</b>	Household Income and Consumption Expenditure Survey
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPA</b>	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
<b>IRP</b>	International Resilience Project
<b>IQ</b>	Intelligence Quotient
<b>MA</b>	Master of Arts
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OVC</b>	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
<b>PhD</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>SC UK</b>	Save the Children United Kingdom
<b>SDPRP</b>	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program
<b>SES</b>	Socio Economic Status
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>WeD</b>	Wellbeing in Developing Countries
<b>WMS</b>	Welfare Monitoring Survey

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Problem**

The last UNICEF “State of the World’s Children” report to focus on poverty estimated that 1 billion children or every second child lives in poverty (UNICEF, 2005). However, despite the increasing policy and academic attention given to child poverty in recent years, we still know very little about children’s perspectives and their experiences of risk, coping and resilience in the context of poverty. Through an exploration of the theoretical concepts of coping and resilience and a focus on poor children’s perspectives and experiences, my study aims to contribute to knowledge about the lives of children in poverty in three important ways. Firstly, it aims to contribute to knowledge by building on existing qualitative child poverty studies to include the lives of poor children that go beyond their material disadvantage or survival. Secondly, by bringing to light the priorities, concerns and responses of poor children who live in a context different from the one covered by most of the qualitative studies i.e. Western context. Thirdly, by establishing if the constructs of coping and resilience can be reliably applied in a society that is very different from the one in which they were developed. I focus on Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world. By foregrounding my analysis on the perspective and experiences of Ethiopian children, I hope to contribute to understanding of the theoretical concepts of coping and resilience in a non-western context.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which was ratified by 191 countries<sup>1</sup>, promised every child a healthy and protected childhood. While the UNCRC has been widely criticized, among other things, for its promotion of a de-contextualized childhood (see, for instance, Nieuwenhuys, 1998; Reynolds et al, 2006), it has played a role in increasing the attention given to the deprivations of children around the world (Boyden and Mann, 2005). Following its ratification in the 1990s, many countries, especially those in Europe such as the United Kingdom, set a target for the reduction of child poverty. For this reason, a large number of studies funded by both government and non-governmental agencies have focused on investigating the prevalence, causes and consequences of child poverty (e.g. Gordon et al, 2001, 2003).

Nevertheless, little is known about poor children's perspectives and their experiences of risk, coping and resilience and this gap in the literature occurs because of three related omissions. Firstly, in the majority of the child poverty literature poverty is taken as an automatic risk to poor children's wellbeing (see also Boyden and Mann, 2005; Enenajor and Lee, 2008). Hence, the possibility that the children themselves do not perceive poverty as a risk to their wellbeing or they view other risks as more damaging to their wellbeing than poverty is not considered. Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that the way children interpret risk matters to a full understanding of their development and wellbeing, not least because the meaning they attach to their experience is an important moderator of its effect on their wellbeing (Boyden and Cooper, 2007). What people perceive as a threat to their wellbeing is also shaped by the culture and context they live in (Ungar, 2005; Boyden and Mann, 2005). Following Ungar and his colleagues (2007: 291) I understood 'culture' as "the customs and traditions, languages and social interactions that provide identity conclusions for individuals and groups" and 'context' as "the social, temporal and geographic location in which culture is manifested".

Secondly, the majority of the child poverty literature focuses on the things children have 'lost', the things that are 'damaged' or 'destroyed' because of their poverty, overlooking their potentially positive experiences, coping and resilience (Feeny and Boyden, 2004). This is problematic because it tells only half of the story (i.e. the children's vulnerability). For example, a good number of anthropological studies (e.g. De Berry, 2004) on children living in other forms of adverse circumstances (such as children affected by war and displacement) have shown that in the face of adversity not all children become overwhelmed, some adjust to or overcome adversity. Some studies even argued that some children could benefit socially and psychologically from exposure to difficult circumstances (Boyden and Mann, 2005 citing Dawes, 1992; Ekblad, 1993; Garnezy, 1983; Zwi, Macrae, and Ugalde, 1992). The few qualitative studies on the perspectives and experiences of children in poverty (see Redmond, 2008, for a review) have also highlighted the resourcefulness and optimism of many children living in poverty.

Thirdly, the bulk of the child poverty literature marginalizes or ignores children's perspectives. This is potentially misleading. For example, a number of qualitative child poverty studies (e.g. Backett-Milburn et al, 2003) that incorporated the views of both children and significant adults (such as parents and teachers) have shown that the concerns

and views of children on health and wellbeing are not necessarily similar to that of adults'. This omission also reinforces the pervasive view of children as relatively passive.

## **1.2. Origins of Research**

When I started my PhD in October 2005, I felt that the child poverty literature is limited in its conceptualization of both “children” and “poverty”. It homogenizes not only children who live in poverty but also the situations of poverty in which they find themselves. These oversights, I believe, have hindered our full understanding of how different groups of children perceive their situation and how differently they strive to cope with that situation. My previous work among commercial sex workers<sup>2</sup> (a category who are homogenized partly by being described as victims) also suggested to me that there are many parallels with how poor children are conceptualized in the literature. I sensed that the perspective that portrays children in poverty as victims, as with the situation of commercial sex workers, is not sufficiently mindful of their agency. Although in Ethiopia children constitute almost 50% of the total population, until very recently, they have attracted little academic research attention (see annotated bibliography by Poluha, 2007). The fact that I was born and brought up in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia and I have worked as a research officer for the Ethiopian component of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD<sup>3</sup>) research program also contributed to my decision to focus on Ethiopia.

After a further review of the literature, I realized that how poor children are conceptualized in the child poverty literature is more complex than I thought at first. I came to understand that the literature could be categorized into three types based on how the situation of children in poverty is approached. The first group of studies is economically oriented child poverty studies that focus on the cause and prevalence of child poverty within and across countries. These studies constitute the bulk of the child poverty literature and primarily focus on quantifiable aspects of child poverty (such as income, consumption, and access to basic services) (e.g. Cornia, 1990; Bradshaw, 1990). The second group of studies is developmentally oriented child poverty studies, which are concerned with the harmful consequences of income poverty on children’s development and wellbeing (e.g. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997). The third group of studies is a small but growing number of qualitative studies that explore the perspectives and experiences of poor children on living in poverty (e.g. Roker, 1998; Willow, 2002). (I will discuss in detail the issues that each of these studies brought to light and their limitations in the literature review chapter).

In the majority of these studies, children are homogenized in one of two ways. First, they are homogenized by the fact of their being children, which entails their representation as incompetent (e.g. they are unable to give information about themselves or those around them), passive and victims. Second, they are homogenized by the fact of their being poor, which is assumed to define all or most aspects of their lives. The first form of homogenization occurs in the majority of economically and developmentally oriented child poverty studies. Economically oriented child poverty studies typically employ random sample household surveys and mainly rely on adult's perspectives (usually the male household head) to study children's lives. Because these studies often measure a narrow range of outcomes (such as income and access to basic services), they also tend to emphasize the negative experiences of children living in poverty at the expense of the children's positive experiences (such as their aspirations) (Feeny and Boyden, 2003, 2004). Likewise, developmentally oriented child poverty studies rarely include children's perspectives as they mainly focus on very young children (children aged 0-3 or 0-5). What is more, because most of these studies are driven by the theoretical assumption that stressful experience (including poverty) experienced in early childhood has negative effects on children's later development, they appear to take poor outcomes (such as school failure) as inevitable for all children living in poverty and, thus, ignore children's resilience. Nonetheless, a number of studies (e.g. Werner and Smith, 1982) have shown that not all children exposed to stressful experience/risk develop problems later on. Schaffer (1996:47 quoted in Boyden and Mann: 2005:6), therefore, argues: "whatever stresses an individual may have encountered in early years, he or she need not forever more be at the mercy of the past...children's resilience must be acknowledged every bit as much as their vulnerability".

The second form of homogenisation (i.e. defining poor children's lives by their poverty) occurs in all of the three groups of studies. However, unlike economically and developmentally oriented studies, the few qualitative studies on children in poverty (e.g. Ridge, 2002; Van der Hoek, 2005) have brought to centre stage the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves. They have emphasised the agency and heterogeneity of children in poverty, for example, in terms of the type and extent of poverty they experience, the effects of poverty on their lives, and their ways of responding to their circumstances. They have also shown the merit of prioritizing children's perspectives and experiences over or alongside those of adults' in order to understand their lives and

concerns. Nevertheless, because most of these studies focus on exploring the perspectives of poor children on their experiences of living in poverty, in some respects, they do not take into account what Gough, McGregor and Camfield (2007: 3) calls their “fully rounded humanity”, i.e. those aspects of children’s lives that go beyond their poverty or survival. Almost all these studies were also conducted in rich, industrialized countries (such as the UK and Netherlands), and their findings are not necessarily transferable to children from other cultures and economic backgrounds, not least because many aspects of childhood vulnerability, coping and resilience are culturally and contextually constructed (see Ungar, 2004; Boyden and Mann, 2005).

In relation to risk, coping and resilience, then, we know very little about the perspectives and experiences of children in non-western<sup>4</sup> cultures and contexts (Ungar, 2008). This is not only because little resilience-related research has been done in non-western contexts but also because the few existing studies assume a typical western middle-class family experience of childhood (that is, childhood as a time of play and no responsibility) which is not necessarily true for children in other parts of the world (Boyden and Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2005). Ungar and his colleagues (2007) also note that in resilience research the focus on outcomes valued in Western contexts has resulted in a narrow set of indicators being associated with resilience such as self-esteem and school performance.

In the rest of this chapter, first I briefly explore key themes and debates in the interdisciplinary approach taken by the “new social studies of childhood” before I explain how my research is informed by some aspects of this approach. Second, I present my objective and give an overview of the key concept (wellbeing) that guided my study and the methodology. Third, I discuss my research questions. Fourth, I present the significance of the study, define the parameters within which the study was undertaken and delineate its scope and limitations. Finally, I outline the plan of the rest of the thesis.

### **1.3. The New Social Studies of Childhood**

In the last two decades or so, two major and related developments have brought about change in the way children and childhood are conceptualized and researched. The first development is related to international agreements and declarations. The second development is related to changes in the conceptualization of children and childhood across different disciplines. In relation to the first development, perhaps the most influential landmark was the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, as



discussed previously. The convention contributed to the recognition of children as ‘experts’ on their own lives as it emphasises the importance of enabling children to express their opinions on important matters and decisions affecting themselves (see, for example, Article 12 of the convention).

When we come to the second development, in the 1980s<sup>5</sup> an increasing number of social scientists such as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and geographers began to question the way in which their disciplines approach children and childhood (e.g. Jenks 1982; Qvortrup et al. 1994; James and Prout 1997). These scholars identified several shortcomings of the ‘old’ approaches to childhood such as the tendency to neglect the social and historical context of childhood in psychology, and the relative lack of research on children and childhood in sociology and anthropology. In sociology, the pervasive and influential theory of socialization, developed in the 1960s, has been criticized for seeing children as ‘incomplete’ or as ‘adults in-training’ rather than as full members of society. It has been argued that by focusing on the future outcome of children as adults (as ‘human becomings’) the socialization perspective gives little attention to the current experiences, actions and role of children (as ‘human beings’) (Qvortrup, 1994). This perspective also depicts children as passive products of socialization and overlooks their active participation and agency in social life (James et al, 1998; James and Prout, 1997; Qvortrup et al, 1994).

In psychology, the developmental paradigm has dominated the study of children for the last century (Woodhead, 1999a), and has been criticized by academics within and outside the discipline (e.g. Burman, 1994; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). It has been argued that because in this paradigm childhood is seen as a natural and universal phenomenon, the role of social and cultural forces in shaping childhood is neglected, and that all children are seen as the same regardless of social and geographical context. Challenging the concept of a universal, ‘context-free’ child, James and Prout (1997: 7) argued that, “the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture”. The child development paradigm has also been criticized for focusing on the individual child and for neglecting the social and cultural context in which the process of ‘growing up’ occurs. What is more, this paradigm tends to characterise adults as rational and independent while children are seen as progressing from “an immature child to mature adult, from simple to complex, from irrational to rational

behaviour, and from dependent childhood to autonomous adulthood” (Boyden and Levison, 2000: 24).

Scholars in what have come to be known as the “new social studies of childhood” have offered an alternative perspective based on the following key premises:

1. Childhood is socially constructed;
2. Childhood is a variable of social analysis which cannot be entirely divorced from other social variables, e.g. gender, class and ethnicity;
3. Children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right;
4. Children are actively involved in the construction of their own social lives;
5. Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood;
6. The emergence of a new paradigm is a contribution to the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

Source: Prout and James (1997: 8)

Scholars have taken up these ideas in different ways, giving rise to different ways of studying children. For example, James, Jenks and Prout (1998) identify four models of childhood in contemporary sociological research: the ‘socially constructed child’, the ‘social structural child’, the ‘minority group child’ and the ‘tribal child’.

More recently, academics within and outside the ‘new’ paradigm have proposed further development of some of the key premises listed above. Prout (2005), for example, has argued that seeing childhood as a social phenomenon is problematic since it reproduces the culture/nature opposition, rather than questioning it:

‘Only by understanding the ways in which childhood is constructed by the heterogeneous elements of culture and nature, which in any case cannot be easily separated, will it be possible to take the field forward’ (p. 44).

The children as ‘becomings’ and children as ‘beings’ dichotomy formulated by Qvortrup (1994) has also been criticized for not taking into account the fact that both adults and children are in the process of changing and that both can be seen as ‘becomings’. Referring to Nick Lee (2001) Prout (2005: 67) writes, “both children and adults should be seen through a multiplicity of becomings in which all are incomplete and dependent”.

What is of interest to me in this study is the argument that children are not only part of the world from birth (‘children as being’ see Qvortrup, 1994) but also they make sense of and actively construct the world in which they live (‘children as social actors’). The first

recognition ('children as being') means that children can be studied in their own right rather than, as has been traditionally the case, being subsumed within the family unit (Qvortrup, 1990). The second recognition means that children are not treated as passive victims of the situations they find themselves. Rather, they have the capacity to make sense of and change not only their situation but also the situation of the people around them i.e. they have agency (James and Prout, 1997; Boyden et al, 2003). However, as a number of scholars within the "new social studies of childhood" have emphasised, having agency does not imply that children are unaffected by the context and situation they find themselves. They are indeed embedded in families and communities, and are constrained by larger structures such as class and religion. In Addis Ababa, for example, Poluha (2004) found that gender, age, class and religion strongly affected the way children related to each other.

This shift in the conceptualization of children and childhood also brought about a shift in the ways children are researched. Scholars in 'the new social studies of childhood' argued that children rather than adults are 'experts' on issues that concern children. Unlike the 'old' approaches which prioritize adults' perspectives over children's because children are conceptualized as incompetent and unreliable, within the 'new' approach the importance of hearing children's voices has been emphasized (James and Prout, 1997; Christensen and James, 2000).

My study on poor children's perspectives and experiences of risk, coping and resilience is informed by these theoretical and methodological assumptions. I recognize children's agency in terms of listening to their voices, conceptualizing them as active social agents and considering them as the 'subjects', rather than 'objects', of research (Morrow and Richards, 1996). This work is 'child-centred' in the sense that children's views and ideas are the central focus of my research. The methods and ethical procedures I adopted in my research also respect children as research participants in their own right. However, I would like to emphasise that focusing on the individual child at the levels of data collection and analysis is different from conceptualizing and presenting the child as a lone figure. During my research process, for example, both the children and I contextualized their experiences. The children talked not only about themselves but also about their relationship with other people (other children and adults) and during the analysis and writing up process, I positioned their descriptions in a wider social, cultural and temporal context.

#### **1.4. Objectives**

The thesis addresses the perspectives and experiences of twenty-six children (11 girls and 15 boys) between the ages of eleven and fourteen in Kolfe area, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa. It employs qualitative research methods with the children, in particular, semi-structured individual interviews, which work well in a predominantly oral culture. “Task-based” methods such as daily diaries written by the children, drawings and timelines are also used to supplement data gained from semi-structured individual interviews. The methodology and analysis is guided by the concept of wellbeing in the sense that wellbeing rather than poverty is my focus. Wellbeing is understood holistically and it covers all aspects of children’s lives that go beyond their poverty or survival. It includes, among other things, their priorities and concerns, which are shaped by their interpretation of their situation, the presence or absence of protective factors and resources and the socio-cultural context in which they live.

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

The study addresses the following questions:

- a) What do children who live in poverty in an urban Ethiopian setting see as risks to their wellbeing and how does this compare with the risks that have been identified in the theoretical and empirical literature on children in poverty?
- b) How do the children interviewed in this study view their ways of dealing with what they perceived as risks (i.e. their coping strategies), the efficacy of their coping strategies and the relationship between these risks and their impact on their wellbeing? Are the coping strategies, coping efficacy and possible relationships identified in the children’s accounts different from those identified in the literature?
- c) What are the factors that the children see as having a positive influence on their wellbeing? In addition, what are the factors that they viewed as moderating the negative effects of risks to lead to positive or resilient outcomes? Are these factors different from those identified in the literature?

#### **1.6. The Significance of the Study**

The study is significant to the development of *comprehensive* and *contextualized* child poverty policy interventions and strategies by government, civil society, and international organizations for three major reasons:

- First, the focus on poor children's perspectives and their experiences has the potential to produce context appropriate and child-centered understandings of risk, coping and resilience.
- Second, the focus on poor children's coping and resilience has the potential to respect the diversity of their responses in the context of risks (Ungar, 2004, 2005; Boyden and Mann, 2005).
- Third, the focus on poor children's wellbeing rather than on their poverty has the potential to respect not only the children's "ability to think, feel, and aspire beyond 'survival'" (Crivello, Camfield and Woodhead, 2009: 52) but also their priorities and concerns, which may not be limited to their poverty.

### **1.7. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Since this research is done in Kolfe area only, its conclusions, strictly speaking, apply to contemporary Kolfe alone. However, there are many reasons why the material from Kolfe area could be taken to be illustrative of conditions and processes in other parts of Addis Ababa, and even urban Ethiopia. First of all Kolfe's settlement history indicates that Kolfe is composed of people who came from not only different areas of Addis Ababa but also different parts of Ethiopia (see Feleke et al, 2006, for a discussion of the social structure of Kolfe area). Secondly, Addis Ababa is both the capital and the biggest urban centre in Ethiopia and Ethiopian society is represented in the city in its mixed forms (i.e. people who came from different parts of the country live in the city). Thirdly, all the children and their families interacted and shared their experiences with people from different areas of Addis Ababa (such as their relatives and some of their work, school and church friends). There is, therefore, a lot of information about other parts of Addis Ababa and Ethiopia in the stories of children in Kolfe area. Some of the children in fact moved to Kolfe area recently from other neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa.

Despite my claim that this is a comprehensive study of the lives of poor children in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa, this study does not include the perspectives of a range of people with whom the children came into daily contact. It does not, therefore, compare and contrast what the children had to say with what their parents, friends, peers, neighbours and relatives might say about them. In other words, in this study risks, coping and resilience are understood through the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves. Yet, I recognize that the study of children living in poverty will not be

complete until it has combined all these perspectives and with the perspectives of the children. My study also does not analyse in detail broader issues that may affect the lives of the children, such as the political economy of childhood in urban Ethiopia. This is because of my desire to focus entirely on children as other studies (e.g. Abebe, 2007, 2008b; Poluha, 2004) have begun to examine the political economy of childhood in Ethiopia.

### **1.8. Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into 9 chapters. This chapter introduced the thesis and presented some of the questions it addresses. Chapter 2 critically reviews the child poverty literature in the context of both developed and developing countries. Then, it discusses how the concept of “wellbeing” may deepen our understanding of the lives of children living in poverty. Chapter 3 explores the relevance of the theoretical concepts of “coping” and “resilience” to the present study. Chapter 4 presents the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter 5 examines risks and their consequences for wellbeing from the perspective and experiences of poor children in Addis Ababa and compares these with what has been found in the child poverty literature so far. Chapter 6 explores the children’s coping strategies, coping efficacy and the relationship of these strategies with their sense of wellbeing again from the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves. Then, it compares the children’s accounts with what has been identified in the child-coping literature. Chapter 7 looks at factors that positively affected the children’s wellbeing (‘positive influences’) and those that helped them to buffer the negative effects of risks (‘protective factors’), and compares this with what has been identified in the literature. Chapter 8 employs case studies to explore how and why interviewed children selected particular coping strategies and how these in turn produced particular outcomes. Chapter 9 summarises the main conclusions of the thesis and highlights their implications for theory, policy and practice. It also suggests areas for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Children in Poverty: a Critical Review of Current Literature**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I critically review the existing child poverty literature in the context of both developed and developing countries, and then discuss how the concept of wellbeing may deepen our understanding of the lives of children in poverty. The chapter has four major sections. In the first section, I look at the child poverty literature by breaking down into three sub-sections: “Economically-oriented child poverty studies”, “Developmentally-oriented child poverty studies”, and “Qualitative child poverty studies”. Specifically, I try to frame the significance of my study by identifying the major findings, recent developments and gaps of each of these studies in relation to the context of my research. In the second section, I briefly discuss the growing number of qualitative and ethnographic studies that explore the lives of poor children in developing countries in the context of child labour, HIV/AIDS and street life. In the third section, I discuss the Ethiopian literature on children and poverty. I decided to look at the Ethiopian literature separately from that of other developing countries because the primary focus of this thesis is on Ethiopia. In the fourth section, I present a conceptual overview of ‘wellbeing’, focusing on its relevance and limitations in relation to my study.

### **2.2. Overview of the International Literature on Children in Poverty**

#### **2.2.1. From ‘child insensitive’ to ‘child sensitive’ statistics: economically-oriented child poverty studies**

Economically oriented child poverty studies constitute the bulk of the child poverty literature in both developed and developing countries. They primarily focus on quantifiable aspects of child poverty (such as income, consumption, and access to basic services), highlighting its prevalence and distribution both within and across countries (e.g. UNICEF’s Child Well-Being Report Card, 2007; SC UK, 2008). The pioneering studies in this group measured the poverty of children by analyzing the income or consumption of household that the children live in. For example, they define children as poor when their family or household has a low income (e.g. Cornia, 1990).

Four major limitations have been widely documented in relation to income-consumption child poverty measures. Firstly, it has been argued that these measures do not take into

account the situation of children who live in societies where income is less relevant because of the limited penetration of a market economy (Harper and Marcus, 1999). This is the case because these measures have evolved from the primacy in the West of income as a means to access living standards, privileges and services. For the same reason, the tendency to focus on formal sector incomes, as these are easier to measure has been criticized for failing to take into account income that comes from the informal sector, where in many countries the vast majority of parents and their children are employed (Feeny and Boyden, 2004). Secondly, it has been argued that most of the studies that use these measures assume that there is an equal distribution of household resources among household members which is rarely the case (Roelen and Gassman, 2008). For example, they ignore age and gender biases in the intra-household allocation of resources. This is because these measures rely on information that is collected at a household level to tell about the consumption of individual household members. Roelen and Gassman (2008) argue that there are two ways of disaggregating household level information to individuals living within the household. The first is to divide total household income by the total number of household members, which is to use per capita income or expenditure. The second is to use equivalence scales. They argue that the first method does not take into account different needs of individuals living in a household (e.g. the fact that the needs of children are different from that of adults) and economies of scale within the household. On the other hand, the second method, although clearly differentiate between the needs of adults versus that of children does not allow for differences among children due to age, gender or location, or acknowledge the fact that household resources are rarely allocated solely in relation to the members' needs.

More recently, recognition of these shortcomings has resulted in attempts to consider children as a statistical unit of observation rather than as attributes of the family (e.g. Gordon et al., 2003). Van der Hoek (2005) who reviews the current child poverty literature in developed countries considers this move very significant and called the statistics which use children as a unit of analysis as 'child sensitive' poverty statistics. There is a danger, however, that in using the child as the unit of analysis to obtain a clearer picture of their circumstances, we lose the ability to link children to the behaviours of their parents, or communities (this is particularly very problematic for Africa where ties of kinship and community are very strong).



Thirdly, income-consumption child poverty measures have been criticised for overlooking children's agency. This was expressed, for example, in terms of not taking into consideration their contribution to the household income (Harper and Marcus, 1999) and in fact by implying that they are necessarily dependent on adults (Feeny and Boyden, 2004). Fourthly, it has been documented that by merely focusing on household income or monetary wellbeing these measures overlook other dimensions of children's lives that depend on non-market-based goods (such as a safe environment to play). In other words, they treated child poverty as a one-dimensional phenomenon. As part of a wider shift in thinking about international development (Gough, McGregor and Camfield, 2007), in recent years (especially in developing countries) it has been widely accepted that children and their families are affected by many other aspects other than monetary resources and that income-based measures do not tell the whole story about poor children's situations.

An example of a study that recognizes the shortcomings of income-based measures, is a study commissioned by UNICEF and conducted by the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics (Gordon et al., 2003a, 2003b). Based on a definition of absolute poverty that was agreed by governments of 117 countries at the World Summit for Social Development, held in March 1995 in Copenhagen, Gordon et al (2003a, 2003b) develop an operational measure of absolute poverty or deprivation indicators for children in developing countries. At the Summit, absolute poverty was defined as "*a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs*". Gordon et al (2003) define 'severe deprivation of basic human need' as "those circumstances that are highly likely to have serious adverse consequences for the health, well-being and development of children" (p. 7). They then identify threshold levels for each of the eight criteria in the World Summit definition of absolute poverty. These are:

1. Food
2. Safe drinking water
3. Sanitation facilities
4. Health
5. Shelter
6. Education
7. Information
8. Access to services

The authors conceptualize deprivation as a continuum that ranges from no deprivation, through mild, moderate and severe deprivation to extreme deprivation at the end of the scale.

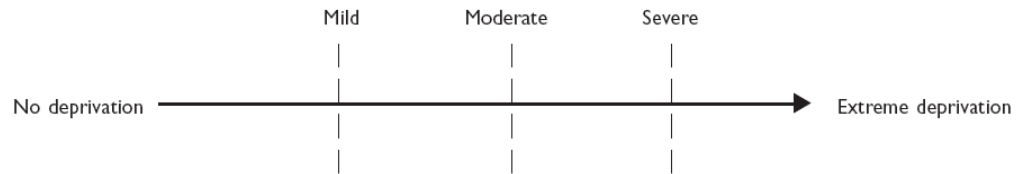


Figure 1: Gordon and colleagues' deprivation scale

Source: Gordon et al., 2003a and 2003b

For example, in terms of sanitation facilities, 'having to share facilities with another household' is categorized as mild deprivation. 'Sanitation facilities outside dwelling' is moderate deprivation. 'No sanitation facilities in or near dwelling' is severe deprivation. 'No access to sanitation facilities' is extreme deprivation. With regard to information, 'cannot afford newspapers or books' is mild deprivation. 'No television but can afford a radio' is moderate deprivation. 'No access to radio, television or books or newspapers' is severe deprivation. 'Prevented from getting access to information by government, etc' is extreme deprivation (from Gordon et al, 2003: 8). They argue that a child is living in absolute poverty *only* if he or she suffers from multiple deprivations — two or more severe deprivations of basic human need.

Although Gordon and colleagues' framework is very precise and as a result easy to operationalize, it does not always tell us about the actual experiences of poor children and, like other universalistic frameworks, it does not consider differences that come with different socio-cultural contexts. For example, with regard to sanitation facilities, it is not clear whether a household that shares facilities that are found outside dwelling with another household is facing mild or moderate deprivation. In my research area, the common thing was to share facilities (such as latrine and pipe water) that are found outside dwelling with other households. I have not come across households that shared facilities that are found inside dwelling, as most of the households in the area did not have toilets or pipe water inside their house. Some households also had a private pit latrine outside dwelling and obviously, this is better than sharing facilities with another household. What is more, the

indicator does not say anything about the quality of facilities. For instance, most of the children in my research area used communal pit latrines that were very unclean. The uncleanness of these latrines was equally important for the children's physical wellbeing to whether they have access to toilet inside dwelling or near their house.

Again, in relation to “information”, the presence or absence of television or radio at home does not necessarily tell us children’s access to information. In the context of urban poor children in Addis Ababa, for instance, children who do not have television at home can go to their neighbours’ house and follow television programmes. At the same time, children may not be allowed to watch television even when there is a television at home. The criterion given by the authors for mild deprivation i.e. "cannot afford newspaper or books" is also problematic to apply to societies that do not have a developed 'reading culture' like Western societies. What is more, being able to afford to buy newspaper or books does not necessarily mean a person has access to information. In my research site and generally in Ethiopia it is not uncommon to come across people who can afford to buy newspaper or books but do not have access to information because they cannot read or do not have the culture of reading or the distribution of newspapers is very limited. And the reverse is also true.

### ***Discussion: What we have learned and what is missing?***

The move from analyzing children as a member of a household to analyzing them as an individual unit is in some respects a big step forward. Child poverty studies that consider children as a statistical unit of analysis (e.g. Gordon et al., 2003) are child-focused and measure poverty as it presents itself to children, while child poverty studies which base themselves on household level income-consumption information rely on assumptions for the assessment of poverty at the child level (Roelen and Gassman, 2008). In a way, therefore, the former option brings to light “information that tends to get lost if children are subordinated to the family collective” (Van der Hoek, 2005: 5). The move from a uni-dimensional to a more multidimensional measure of child poverty is again a big step forward in terms of a more comprehensive understanding of poor children’s experiences. Nevertheless, as Roelen and Gassman (2008) remind us, not everyone has moved to multi-dimensionality.

Despite these two major developments, however, economically-oriented child poverty studies still do not tell us about the perceptions and experiences of the “‘real’ children behind the statistics” (Van der Hoek, 2005: 6). The major method used to collect information about child poverty, i.e. national household surveys, for example, rarely includes children as informants. The common practice is to ask parents or other significant adults about children’s lives. But several studies have shown that adult perceptions of what children think, do or need, may differ from what children themselves think, do or need (Hill, 2005). Feeny and Boyden (2003, 2004) after reviewing the current child poverty literature notice that many child poverty researchers prioritize the quantifiable aspects of poverty at the expense of the experiences of poor children and they go on to call this the “tireless obsession with statistics” (p.7). They also argue that the emphasis on only quantifiable aspects of poverty has led to child poverty being represented “as an overwhelming experience of loss”, which neglects children’s positive experiences, resilience, and agency.

#### **2.2.2. From description to process: developmentally-oriented child poverty studies**

The second group of studies are particularly concerned with the harmful consequences of income poverty for children’s development and wellbeing (e.g. Conger et al., 1992, 1994; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Psychologists and public health scholars in the United States have conducted many of these studies. The focus of earlier studies in this group was mainly the relation between income poverty and children’s cognitive outcomes such as developmental delay and learning disability (e.g. Ramey and Finkelstein, 1981). Later, focus has expanded to include the association between income poverty and children’s socio-emotional outcomes such as social adjustment, self-esteem and depression (Huston et al, 1994). These studies found out that income poverty is more strongly related to children’s cognitive outcomes than to their emotional outcomes.

Until recently, the general goal of studies in this group has been describing the negative effects of income poverty on children’s outcomes. A large number of studies, books and reports have documented that children in poor families are more likely to experience a wide range of poor developmental outcomes (such as problems with school achievement and socio-emotional development), adverse health and other outcomes than children in non-

poor families. Recently, however, these studies went beyond the description of effects to examine the factors and processes (such as family and neighbourhood conditions) mediating effects of income poverty on child development and wellbeing. In relation to mediating family processes, for example, in their reanalysis of data from Glueck's classic study of juvenile delinquents, Sampson and Laub (1994) note that family processes mediated the effects of poverty on delinquency to a substantial extent. Namely, poverty inhibits the capacity of families to guide and discipline their children, which in turn increases the likelihood of adolescent delinquency. In a similar fashion, in their study of rural Midwestern families, Conger et al (1994) argued that family processes mediated the effect of poverty on internalizing and externalizing problems in adolescents. Internalizing problems refer to a condition in which a person's psychological problems are turned inward and cause emotional symptoms that are not often visible to others, such as anxiety, depression and withdrawal. Externalizing problems indicate a condition in which a person's problems are turned outward and they are expressed in behavioural problems or actions that are easily visible to others such as delinquency and aggression. Specifically, the authors argued that economic pressure experienced by parents increased parents' discontent, marital conflict, and conflict between parents and children over money. High levels of spousal irritability together with dispute over money matters is then associated with greater hostility in general by parents toward their children and this increased the likelihood of adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems, as shown in figure 2.

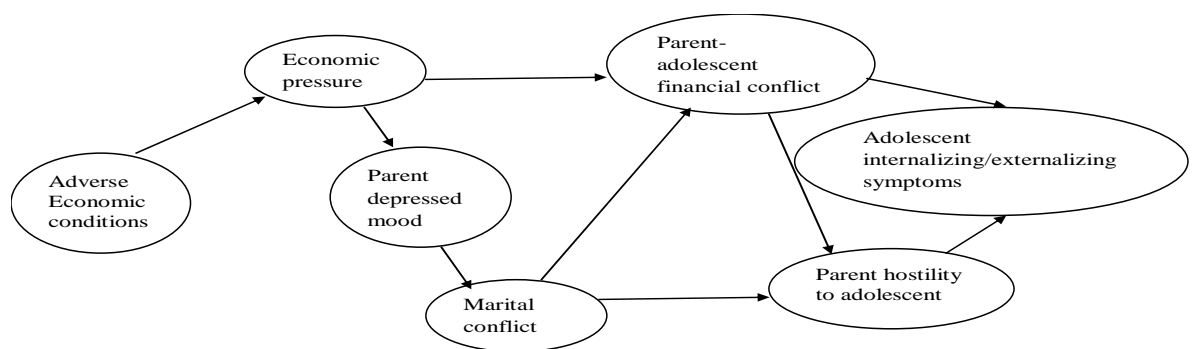


Figure 2: Conger and colleagues' model of the relation between poverty and adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems

Source: Conger et al (1994) p. 544

Recent developmental studies also recognized the developmental significance of the timing (whether poverty occurred during the early, middle or later years of children's lives), depth (whether children are living in persistent/chronic or transitory poverty), and duration (whether children live in poverty for a short or long time) of poverty (e.g. Costello et al, 2003; McLeod and Nonnemaker, 2000; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 2000). They also acknowledged variations in effects of poverty on children associated with age, gender, and ethnicity (e.g. Dupere et al, 2008). For example, in the context of American children, Duncan et al, 1994 argue that children in families experiencing both persistent and short-term poverty had lower IQs and more internalizing problems than never-poor children, but persistent poverty had a much stronger negative effect on these outcomes than short-term poverty (cited in Huston et al., 1994). In terms of timing of poverty, Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) argue that children who experience poverty during their early years have lower rates of school completion than children who experience poverty only in their later years.

Mainly prompted by Urie Bronfenbrenner's "ecological model" of development (1986), which sees human development as a complex reciprocal interaction between individuals and their environment, many of these studies also moved towards an ecological approach that takes account of influences on children in poverty that go beyond the immediate context of the child and family (e.g. school and neighbourhood influences). Based on survey data from 300 adolescents and their parents in the United States, Barrera and colleagues (2002), for instance, note that in addition to family processes, adolescents' association with 'deviant' peers mediated the effect of poverty on internalizing and externalizing problems in adolescents.

### ***Discussion: What we have learned and what is missing?***

The moves from i) a focus on identifying prevalence of poverty to a focus on outcomes/impacts of poverty, and ii) description to process are useful for a full understanding of the lives of children in poverty. The focus on process in particular allowed child development researchers to differentiate the effects on children of income poverty from a number of other factors, which they believe are associated with poverty such as single parenthood, parent's poor educational attainment, and unemployment. It also enabled them to understand a number of pathways, which they view as explaining the negative

effects of economic poverty on children such as poor parenting and inter-parental conflict caused by economic pressure (e.g. Conger et al, 1992). The recognition of the importance of the timing, depth and duration of poverty in the study of child development and variations in effects of poverty on children associated with demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnicity are also very significant for a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of poverty on children's health and development. What is more, the recognition of the need to move to "ecological model" of development has enabled child development researchers to look at not only the child and her immediate family/community environment, but also the interaction with the larger environment (e.g. culture).

However, almost all studies in this group were quantitative and based on data from adults and so tended to depict children as passive. In the introduction section of their much-cited work "The Effects of Poverty on Children" Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg Duncan, for example, note:

Because children are dependent on others, they enter or avoid poverty by virtue of their family's economic circumstances. Children cannot alter family conditions by themselves, as least until they approach adulthood (Brooks-Gunn 1997: 55 quoted in Enenajor and Lee, 2008: 3).

In the above quote, the authors presented children not only as dependents but also as individuals who do not have economic agency, reflecting the dominant western middle class conception of childhood. Studies in this group also did not consider the coping responses of children and with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Bradley et al., 1994) almost all of them overlooked issues of children's resilience and positive outcomes (see also Huston et al., 1994). Nonetheless, these studies have influenced another body of literature that since the 1970s has been devoted to issues of children's resilience (e.g. Garnezy, 1991; Werner and Smith, 1982) and coping responses (e.g. Wadsworth and Compas, 2002) in the context of poverty. This will be addressed in chapter 3.

### **2.2.3. From poverty to wellbeing? Qualitative studies of the perspectives and experiences of poor children**

Over the last decade or so, a growing number of qualitative studies (especially in developed, industrialised countries) have examined children's perspectives and experiences of living in poverty or economic disadvantage. Most of these studies have drawn on the

theoretical and methodological assumptions of the “new social studies of childhood”, which conceptualizes children as “social actors” (active subjects with agency and their own perspectives) and “beings” (present human beings as well as future adults), as discussed in the previous chapter. Recently, Redmond (2008) and Attree (2004, 2006, 2008) conducted a systematic review of some of these qualitative studies in terms of issues that they covered, major findings and gaps. I find these reviews very relevant for my discussion here.

Table 1: Characteristics of studies included in Attree (2004) and Redmond (2008) reviews (from Attree, 2004: 682 and Redmond, 2008: 3)

<b>Author</b>	<b>Aim of the study</b>	<b>Sample no.</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Sample type</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Middleton et al (1994)</b>	To explore what children need to ensure that they are not excluded from mainstream society	130	8, 11, 13 and 16 (year groups)	Socio-economic status differentiated by area	Midlands and North of England More/less affluent areas
<b>Davis and Ridge (1997)</b>	To explore the interlocking effects of rurality and low income, and children’s accounts of exclusion and marginalization	95 (42 on low income)	8-19, (majority 11-15)	Families in receipt of income support and free school meals	West Somerset (rural)
<b>Roker (1998)</b>	To describe young people’s experience of growing up in family poverty	60	13-18	Poor children	United Kingdom
<b>Weinger (2000)</b>	To explore low and middle income children’s views on class and friendship choice	48	5-14	Middle-class and poor children	United States
<b>Morrow (2001)</b>	To explore and develop the concept of social capital as it relates to young people, using a case study approach	101	12-13, 14-15	Comprehensive school areas of low-socio-economic status	New town in South East (in top third of deprived local authority areas in England)



<b>Author</b>	<b>Aim of the study</b>	<b>Sample no.</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Sample type</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Ridge (2002)</b>	To study how poverty and social exclusion affect children's perceptions of their social and familial lives	40	10-17	Poor children	United Kingdom
<b>Daly and Leonard (2002)</b>	To explore the everyday lives and concerns of children (and parents) living in low-income households	28	12-16	Low-income, two-parent and lone parent families	Ireland-urban/rural
<b>Willow (2002)</b>	To explore how poverty affects the lives of children and young people	106	5-16	Children in receipt of free school meals	Midlands, North and south of England. Areas with high levels of Poverty
<b>Backett-Milburn et al. (2003)</b>	To examine children's views on processes that impact on inequality and health	35	9-12	Middle-class and poor children	United Kingdom
<b>Percy (2003)</b>	To gain insights into the experiences of minority poor children through description of what is special to them	20	6-12	Children attending an after-school programme	Urban low-income housing project (US)
<b>Taylor and Fraser (2003)/Taylor and Nelms (2006)</b>	Two waves in a long-term study tracking children as they grow up in a Melbourne suburb	About 40 each wave	11-12/15-16	Mostly low income, some well off	Australia
<b>Van der Hoek (2005)</b>	To examine the strategies children employ to cope with poverty	65	6-16	Poor children	Netherlands
<b>Ridge (2007)</b>	To explore the perspectives of low-income children	61	8-14	Poor children	United Kingdom

Author	Aim of the study	Sample no.	Age range	Sample type	Location
	before and after mother's return to work				
<b>Sutton et al. (2007)</b>	To explore two contrasting groups of children's views and experience of social differences	42	8-13	Middle-class and poor children	United Kingdom
<b>Wikeley et al. (2007)</b>	To examine the impact of out-of-school educational relationships on young people's learning	55	11 and 14	Middle-class and poor children	United Kingdom

Redmond (2008) reviewed nine qualitative studies on children's perspectives on economic adversity in developed countries that were published since 1998. In terms of the issues that they covered, he argued, the nine qualitative studies he reviewed can be grouped into three. In the first group are four of the studies (Roker, 1998; Ridge, 2002; Taylor and Fraser, 2003/Taylor and Nelms, 2006; Van der Hoek, 2005) which explore the perspectives and experiences of children living in low-income families on a number of issues related to living in poverty. Roker (1998) examines children's family incomes, personal finances, friends and social lives, family relationships, health, school, crime and future aspirations. Ridge (2002) looks at children's family relations, income sources, school, fitting in with friends and sources of social exclusion. Taylor and Fraser (2003) and Taylor and Nelms (2006) focus on family relations, school and friends. Van der Hoek (2005) explores the strategies used by children to cope with living in low-income families.

In the second group are three of the studies (Backett-Milburn et al., 2003; Sutton et al., 2007; Weinger, 2000) which examine differences (and some similarities) between poorer and middle-class children. In the third group, according to Redmond, are two of the studies (Wikeley et al., 2007 and Ridge, 2007) which focus on specific issues such as attitudes towards education and maternal employment. Wikeley et al (2007) look at how children develop educational relationships with adults outside of the school setting and Ridge (2007) examines what children in low-income lone parent families think and do when their mothers take up employment.

Redmond (2008) notes that three themes emerged very strongly across the nine qualitative studies he reviewed. First, *social exclusion*-what has a greatest impact on poor children's lives is not poverty as such but the social exclusion that comes with it. Second, *agency*-children are not passive victims: they act upon or deal with the situation they find themselves in and help their parents in their effort to make ends meet for the family. Third, *family*-family relationships are a significant resource in the children's lives.

Redmond (2008) also identifies a number of gaps in relation to the qualitative studies that he reviewed. Two of these gaps are of particular interest to this study. First, he notes that most of the qualitative studies he reviewed focused on children's perspectives and experiences on economic adversity and did not incorporate their perspective and experiences on other disadvantages that they may face such as mistreatment and family violence. This is particularly a concern because a large number of developmentally oriented child poverty studies (e.g. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997) indicate that children who live in poverty are more likely to face multiple disadvantages. Second, although many of these studies revealed the importance of family support for children in terms of mitigating the impact of economic adversity on their wellbeing, Redmond argues, they presented little evidence, from the children's own perspectives, of what happens when family relations are under strain (for example when there is family violence at home).

Attree (2004, 2006, 2008) reviewed nine qualitative studies (three of which reviewed by Redmond, particularly, Backett-Milburn et al., 2003; Ridge, 2002 and Roker, 1998) with poor children in developed countries that were published since 1987. Attree (2006) organizes her review around the theme of "the social cost of poverty", arguing that most of the studies she reviewed described the costs of poverty not only as material but also as strongly social. In terms of themes, 'children's friendships' and 'social lives' are discussed in all the nine studies that she reviewed. Issues that are related to the children's 'family relationships', 'keeping up appearance' and 'expectations and aspirations' are discussed in all except two of the studies that she reviewed. Their 'neighbourhood social environment' and 'perceptions of poverty' are subjects of discussion in all except three of the studies that she reviewed and their 'financial strategies' are covered in five of the nine studies (Attree, 2008: 12).

***Discussion: What we have learned and what is missing?***

The few qualitative studies on the perspectives and experiences of poor children on living in poverty have brought to light a number of issues that are critical for a comprehensive and child-centred understanding of child poverty:

- *The agency of children living in poverty*: how they make sense of and change their situation and the situation of people around them (e.g. Morrow, 2001; Ridge, 2002; Percy, 2003; Van der Hoek, 2005).
- *The heterogeneity of poor children*: how children in poverty are different from each other in terms of the type and extent of poverty they experience, the effects of poverty on their lives, and their ways of response (e.g. Van der Hoek, 2005).
- *Poor children's ways of coping with poverty* which included:
  - Saving money or borrowing from other family members (e.g. Daly and Leonard, 2002; Ridge, 2002);
  - Seeking the financial support of relatives and kin (e.g. Daly and Leonard, 2002; Backett-Milburn et al., 2003);
  - Doing part time jobs to support self and family (e.g. Roker, 1998; Ridge, 2002) and
  - Resignation (e.g. Ridge, 2002)
- *Protective factors* (factors that help to reduce the impacts of poverty on children's wellbeing): these are supportive relationships with family members and friends, and the neighbourhood social environment (e.g. Ridge, 2002).

The majority of these studies focused on exploring the perspectives and personal experiences of poor children on living in poverty. Particularly, they focused on looking at what living in poverty means to children; how it affects different aspects of their lives (materially, socially as well as emotionally); how they respond to it and what kinds of resources they draw upon to minimize its effect. This focus is quite understandable given the fact that these topics had not been addressed by previous child poverty studies. Nonetheless, to some extent this focus underplays the children's fully rounded humanity. That is to say, the lives of poor children cannot be fully understood by only focusing on their poverty, and this focus may obscure their real priorities and concerns.

### **2.3. Overview of Qualitative and Ethnographic Studies on the Lives of Poor Children in Developing countries**

During recent years, an increasing number of qualitative and ethnographic studies have explored the lives of poor children in developing countries particularly in the context of child labour, HIV/AIDS and street life. In this section, I look briefly at what some of these studies say about key themes that are explored in my thesis, such as agency, coping strategies and resilience.

In the context of child labour, a number of qualitative and ethnographic studies have documented the diversity of working children's lives, their perspectives on work, the active role they play in changing their lives and their families' lives, and the strength they display in the face of adversity (Woodhead, 1999b; Nieuwenhuys, 1994, 1996; Reynolds, 1991). Bringing children's perspectives on work to the centre of the analysis, qualitative and ethnographic studies have also challenged simplistic and de-contextualised approaches that conceptualize all children's work as exploitative 'labour' and that depict children who work as vulnerable. For example, drawing on ethnographic research in the wine lands of the Western Cape Province in South Africa, Susan Levine (1999) shows how working children in South Africa defend their right to work, taking into account the needs of their families and the experience of material poverty that permeates their lives. She argues that the children's decision to work, despite exploitative situations, reflects their agency and resilience in the face of adversity, rather than simply being an example of the sort of forced child labour condemned by campaigners. Similarly, in her ethnographic research with street-working children and their parents in Lima (Peru), Invernizzi (2003) shows how children's and adult's perceptions of children's work do not necessarily match the 'ideal image of childhood': a childhood free from social and economic responsibilities. She found that children's and adults' perceptions of children's work are complex and vary depending on factors such as the type of activity children perform, the financial situation of the family and their life history or social position. The Dutch anthropologist Olga Nieuwenhuys (1996) also criticizes the tendency to analyse children's work in developing countries based on a western model of childhood. Drawing on her fieldwork in Kerala she emphasises the importance of recognizing working children's agency in terms of creating and negotiating positive life experiences for themselves and their families (see also Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Reynolds, 1991).

In relation to HIV and AIDS, a large number of qualitative and anthropological studies have examined the lives of orphaned children in developing countries (particularly in Africa). As with the case of child labour, these studies show the heterogeneity of orphan children's experiences, their coping strategies, strength and resilience in difficult circumstances, and the active role they play in accomplishing care-giving responsibilities and supporting their families' survival strategies. Most of these studies also challenge approaches that emphasise the vulnerability and powerlessness of 'AIDS orphans', and link them with social pathology such as being criminal or homeless (Bray, 2003). For example, drawing on ethnographic research with 31 rural children and youth in South Africa, Henderson (2006) argues that an emphasis on the vulnerability of AIDS orphans obscures not only the ways in which these children share similar circumstances with other poor children but also their strengths and the way they positively negotiate their everyday lives. She challenges one-dimensional conceptions of poverty and AIDS and a narrow focus on loss by exploring orphan children's daily experiences. Similarly, based on qualitative research in Malawi and Lesotho with young migrants with HIV/AIDS and their guardians, Young and Ansell (2003) show how children play a central role in the survival strategies of their extended families' households. They argue that in response to HIV/AIDS, household and family structures are becoming more fluid and complex in these two Southern African countries, and children are often migrating to increase their family's income and deal with daily hardships. Robson (2000, 2004) also explores the role young people in Zimbabwe play as carers of adult members of their household who suffer from HIV/AIDS. She argues that the role young people play as caregivers is usually hidden, given the tendency to emphasise the vulnerability and dependence of children affected by HIV/AIDS (see also Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006; Robson and Ansell, 2001; Evans, 2005).

Street children in developing countries have been the focus of intense academic interest over the past two decades. Qualitative and ethnographic studies have highlighted, among other things, the active role street children play in the construction of their social worlds, their coping strategies and the diversity of their actual experiences. In an anthropological study with street children aged between 6 and 18 years old in Northwest Kenya, Davies (2008), for example, shows how street children actively create their own world with its own identity and subculture. He argues that through this subculture the children experience stability and quality of life. The subculture, according to him, not only provides the

children with group and peer support, but also empowers them with a degree of agency through their physical freedom and mobility. He challenges “western perceptions of street children’s lives as impoverished, unstimulating and physically and mentally detrimental” (p.326). Similarly, drawing on ethnographic research with street girls aged between 12 and 20 years in Yogyakarta, one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia, Beazley (2002) shows how street girls create their own gendered sense of space and identities in response to the abusive discrimination they face not only from mainstream society, but also from men and boys on the street. She argues that despite this ‘doubly structured subordination’ street girls in Yogyakarta are not passive victims (ibid: 1679). Rather, they actively reject what mainstream society expects of them by creating their own separate culture through their style, income-earning activities and the production of street girl identities. Rurevo and Bourdillon (2003) echo a similar perspective in their ethnographic research with street girls in Harare, Zimbabwe. They note that although street girls in Harare are liable to sexual harassment from boys and men on the streets, like street boys, they are capable of independent living and show competencies in difficult circumstances (see also Beazley, 2003).

Most of the studies I briefly review in this section have drawn on the theoretical and methodological approaches of the “new social studies of childhood” as discussed in chapter 1. They offer useful insights into the way poor children view their lives, the contribution they make to their families, their agency, resourcefulness and resilience. This research is different from the majority of economically and developmentally oriented child poverty studies I discussed in the previous sections, in that considerable attention is devoted to the perspectives of children living in poverty, who are conceptualized as ‘subjects’ rather than ‘objects’ of research. Such studies also present poor children as active agents in their own lives who are capable of responding to situations of adversity, rather than as passive victims.

#### **2.4. Overview of the Ethiopian Literature on Children in Poverty**

With very few exceptions (e.g. Poluha, 2004; Abebe, 2008a) the Ethiopian academic literature on children in poverty is extremely empirical, i.e. not theoretical. One of the consequences of this is that the literature does not reflect a clear differentiation of views and positions that one notices in most of the Western literature on child poverty. It also means that the literature is difficult to classify. Hence, a discussion of the Ethiopian

literature on children and poverty would necessarily read more like a review of specific works than a discussion of themes covered by groups of studies. It is also for this reason that it would be more practical to approach the literature by focusing on how children are depicted in it (e.g., whether they were included as informants or whether they were asked about their perspectives and personal experiences).

Following the Ethiopian government's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, a growing number of studies, especially consultancy reports prepared for government and non-government agencies (e.g. Research papers in Habtamu's edition, 1996) and undergraduate and postgraduate theses (e.g. Kjörholt, 2006; Emebet, 1998) both in Ethiopia and internationally, have focused on Ethiopian children. However, children's own reports of their everyday lives and experiences are hardly included in-depth and properly in many of these studies. Lack of attention to children's perspectives and personal experiences is especially common in economic research on child-poverty in Ethiopia that uses data from household surveys such as the Household Income and Consumption expenditure Survey (HICES) and Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) conducted by Central Statistical Authority of Ethiopia. The principal sources of data have been adults who are asked questions about children's lives (Jones et al, 2005). As a result, although there is now relatively a substantial body of quantitative data in relation to child poverty (see, for example, Betemariam, 2000), most of it does not directly address the experiences of children.

Poluha's (2004) study of cultural continuity in Ethiopia through the lives of poor school children in Addis Ababa stands out for its pioneering attempt to increase the visibility and voice of poor children in research on children in Ethiopia. In *The Power of Continuity*, Poluha's aim was to identify and understand the processes behind what she calls the persistence of 'hierarchical patron-client relations' (an exchange relationship where players have reciprocal needs and expectations, but unequal power and status) between government officials and citizens in Ethiopia. She argues that one can methodologically use the 'cultural schemas' of the children to learn about aspects of a society (including politics) of which they are a part. She defines 'cultural schemas' as 'all the interpretations an individual more or less shares with others with whom she/he communicates on a regular or not so regular basis and/or with whom she/he shares a language, religion, national media like TV and so on' (p.18).



She notes that through observation, interaction and negotiation with other children and adults, the school children learn that hierarchical super-subordinate relations characterize most relationships in their surroundings. The children also learn to take these things for granted. Because the children take these issues for granted and considered them to be 'natural', she argues, they do not reflect upon their situation and 'the lack of reflection, in itself, tends to promote continuity' (p.193). In school, at home and in their religious institutions, the author notes, the children also learn to conceptualize knowledge as something limited and static. As a result, they are not taught 'to use information to revise or question what they already knew or to ask new questions' (p.193). She then relates and compares the children's learning processes with the major characteristics of the Ethiopian state from 1855 to the present. Poluha based her work mainly on an ethnographic data, which she collected between 2000 and 2002 in one of the schools in Addis Ababa. She used individual and group interviews, diary and essay writing by the children and participant observation as major techniques of data collection (see Bethlehem, 2007, for a review).

I think Poluha's effort to make sense of the characteristics of people-state relationships by listening to its children's views and perspectives is really a big step forward. This is the case because, despite constituting almost 50% the total population, children in Ethiopia to the large part remain invisible and are not given chance to speak about themselves or those around them. Nonetheless, in her analysis of the school children's lives, Poluha gives little attention to their neighbours, although neighbours (both immediate and distant) play a significant role in children's lives in Addis Ababa, particularly in poor neighbourhoods (Bethlehem, 2006). In the absence of responsible parents or caretakers, for instance, neighbours play an important role in fulfilling poor children's needs. They support children in terms of feeding them, clothing them, giving moral support and advice and helping them with their education. This oversight by the author is partly related to the fact that her fieldwork is limited to a school setting. Poluha says she attempted to have a picture of the children's lives outside the school by asking them to write a diary about their activities and interactions outside their school. She then argues the diaries which are written by the children show where the children spend most of their time "which the home, school and mosque or church came to constitute" (p.44). There is also a possibility that the children's neighbourhood was not mentioned in their diaries as a consequence of the diary format. The diary format prepared by Poluha may not be sufficiently open to enable children to

write all their activities and interactions. The fact that the children's neighbourhood does not appear on the children's diaries should not necessarily be read as indicating that neighbours do not play a major role in the children's lives or the children do not interact with their neighbours as frequently as they do with people in their homes, school, mosque or church. Therefore, one way of enriching our understanding of the lives of urban poor children in Ethiopia is examining their lives in a home and neighbourhood setting. The other is studying their perspectives and experiences in their own right with the aim of understanding their concerns, priorities and responses. I have set myself these tasks in this study.

Poluha (2007) is a collection of ethnographic essays (some of them based on Master Theses in Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University) about the lives of boys and girls in rural and urban Ethiopia in general. The topics that are covered in the book include conceptualization of children and childhood in two neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa (one of them is Kolfe) (by Awan) and children's programs in electronic and print media in Ethiopia, and children's textbooks used in Addis Ababa (by Muluembeat).

Other studies on children that have been carried out in the contexts of poverty in Ethiopia for the most part focused on what has come to be known as 'Orphans and Vulnerable Children' (OVCs) such as street children, AIDS orphans and child sex workers. Qualitative and ethnographic studies of these groups (e.g. Woodhead, 1998; Heinonen, 2000; Abebe and Aase, 2007; Abebe, 2008b; Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009) explore, among other things, the active role children play in supporting the livelihoods of their families (Abebe, 2007, 2008; Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009), their perceptions about working (Woodhead, 1998) and their survival strategies in the face of difficulties (Abebe, 2008b).

Based on qualitative research with orphans and families in rural and urban Ethiopia, Abebe and Aase (2007), for example, explore how orphans and families experience and cope with the challenges of HIV/AIDS. By presenting data that show the complex nature of orphan-hood and orphan care in Ethiopia, they challenge simplistic and polarized arguments either that the extended family system in Africa has been stretched too far by the growing challenges of HIV/AIDS and cannot provide support for orphans, or that the extended family system in Africa is still strong. They argue that there are multiple dimensions of care (social, material, emotional) and that there are differences between rural and urban extended families in Ethiopia in their capacity to care for orphans due to, among

other things, structural differences (e.g. livelihood strategies) and the values attached to children.

More recently, papers published from the qualitative component of the Young Lives research project, a longitudinal qualitative and quantitative research on child poverty in Ethiopia, Peru, India and Vietnam, also provided a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the wellbeing of Ethiopian children in poverty (e.g. Camfield and Tafere, 2008).

## **2.5. ‘Wellbeing’**

My study into the lives of poor children in Addis Ababa is guided by the concept of wellbeing. This is because, unlike the bulk of the child poverty literature which focuses on what children do not have and what they lost because of their poverty (as discussed in section 2.2), the concept of wellbeing has the potential to understand the lives of children in poverty in a *comprehensive* and *positive* manner (White, 2008). In justifying the use of the wellbeing concept in the study of the lives of poor people in developing countries Gough, McGregor and Camfield (2007: 3), for example, note:

The first [reason] is to acknowledge the fully rounded humanity of poor men, women and children in developing countries; recognizing that they are not completely defined by their poverty, nor can they be fully understood in its terms alone. Poor people in developing countries strive to achieve wellbeing for themselves and their children...even alongside deprivations, poor men, women and children are able to achieve some elements of what they conceive of as wellbeing... without this, we would argue, their lives would be unbearable

In addition to its potential to study “the fully rounded humanity” of poor children including their strengths and positive experiences, the concept of wellbeing helps to bring to focus the children’s own perceptions and experiences of life (White, 2008). This is the case because wellbeing has at least two components: ‘objective wellbeing’ and ‘subjective wellbeing’ (Gough et al, 2007). While the former is often measured by external criteria, the latter concerns people’s subjective evaluation of their circumstances.

Wellbeing is also essentially a culturally and contextually embedded concept. This is the case not only because people’s perceptions and experiences of life differ according to the culture and context in which they live but also, as White (2008) argues, even ‘objective wellbeing’ constitutes subjective element, and that its meaning differs by socio-cultural

context. For example, the material needs of people from different socio-cultural background vary. Therefore, Crivello, Camfield and Woodhead (2009: 1) note:

‘Wellbeing’ is a key concept in the study of children’s lives over time, given its potential to link the objective, subjective, and inter-subjective dimensions of their experiences in ways that are holistic, contextualized and longitudinal.

How is wellbeing defined? A recent systematic review of the child wellbeing literature found that wellbeing is defined in a variety of ways but it is a commonly used term in the study of child development (Pollard and Lee, 2003; see Camfield, Streuli and Woodhead, 2008, for a review of different approaches to wellbeing). In the wider social science literature, no agreement has also been reached concerning its meaning (Gough et al., 2007; McGregor, 2007; White, 2008). In my study, I drew on the conceptualization of wellbeing developed by the ESRC Research group on the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) research project. WeD conceptualizes wellbeing as a concept that brings together the ‘subjective’ (“values, perceptions and experience”), ‘material’ (“practical welfare and standard of living”) and ‘relational’ (“personal and social relations”) dimensions of people’s lives (White, 2008:7). I am particularly interested in the ‘subjective’ dimensions of wellbeing i.e. children’s perceptions and experiences. Nevertheless, as White (2008) notes any discussion of the ‘subjective’ dimension involves some element of the ‘material’ and ‘relational’, since these three dimensions of wellbeing are fundamentally entwined.

In the wellbeing literature, White (2008) notes, the ‘subjective’ dimension of wellbeing is often addressed by quantitative studies that numerically code people’s perceptions, despite the fact that the question calls for a qualitative approach. She expresses concern that by emphasising the “abstracted perceptions” rather than the people whose perceptions are being quantified the process of quantification may “divorce the ‘subjective’ from the subject” (p.9). The WeD approach to wellbeing emphasises “a person-centred” understanding of wellbeing, or what White (2006:2) calls bringing back “the subject to the subjective” and also recognizes that the understanding of each of the three dimensions mentioned above is socially and culturally grounded and changes over time (White, 2008).

Wellbeing is, however, a widely criticized concept. First, there is a concern that a focus on wellbeing distracts one from issues of suffering and harm (Bevan, 2007). There are also those who argues that “wellbeing is the preoccupation of the over-rich and over-privileged”

and “inappropriate for the poor [...] [who] have other, more immediate concerns to get on with” (White, 2008: 11). Bevan (2007: 309), therefore, notes:

If we do not have the concepts, research questions and methods to help us to understand the social and cultural construction of extreme suffering we will be doing neither scientific nor humanitarian justice to many of the poor people we are studying.

There is also the issue of “depoliticizing adversity” (Camfield et al., 2008 citing White, 2008) and wellbeing has also been criticized for lack of precision in terms of its definition and measurement, and cross-cultural validity.

## **2.6. Conclusion: Beyond Poverty: The Concept of Wellbeing**

The WeD’s approach to wellbeing has the potential to overcome the theoretical and methodological limitations that I have discussed in section 2.2, as summarized below:

- Unlike most research on child poverty which gives emphasis to what poor children do not have and have ‘lost’ because of their poverty, WeD’s conceptualization of wellbeing has the potential to study the lives of poor children beyond their poverty or survival (for example, their strengths and positive experiences).
- The fact that wellbeing is conceptualized as being “person-centred” helps not only to bring children’s perspectives and their experiences of life into focus but also to respect their agency i.e. their ability to make sense of and change their situation and the situation of people around them.
- The fact that wellbeing is conceptualized as being embedded culturally and contextually helps to situate children’s perspectives and their experiences in a socio-cultural context and to acknowledge the diversities of their experiences.

To further understand poor children’s perspectives and their experiences of risk, coping and resilience, this study also explores the relevance to the present study of some of the key concepts and theories in the literature that inform discussion of children’s development, wellbeing and responses to adverse circumstances. Specifically, it examines whether the theoretical concepts of ‘coping’ and ‘resilience’ provide a useful framework for studying poor children’s perspectives and their experiences in Addis Ababa.

## Chapter 3: Children's Coping, Risk and Resilience: a Critical Review of Current Literature

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I critically review the children's 'coping', and 'risk and resilience' literature with the aim of examining the theoretical relevance of coping and resilience to a comprehensive and contextualized study of children in poverty in Addis Ababa. Although in recent times the terms coping and resilience are often used interchangeably<sup>6</sup>, they came from two separate bodies of literature and they mean two different things. Commenting on the differences between the two theoretical concepts, coping researchers Compas and colleagues (2001), for example, note:

“...coping can be viewed as efforts to enact or mobilize competence or personal resources, and resilience can be viewed as the successful outcome of these actions. Coping includes the behaviours and thoughts that are implemented by individuals when faced with stress without reference to their efficacy, whereas resilience refers to the results of the coping responses of competent individuals who have been faced with stress and have coped in an effective and adaptive manner. However, not all coping efforts represent the enactment of competence, and not all outcomes of coping are reflected in resilience; some coping efforts fail” (p.89).

Another coping researchers Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) also summarize the way in which children's coping research is different from other related research (such as work on children's risk and resilience) like this:

“Coping research is distinguished [from other research] by its focus on *what children actually do* (their profile of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses) *in dealing with specific difficulties in real-life contexts...*” (Emphasis added; p. 120)

Here, I also look at the 'coping', and 'risk and resilience' literature separately with the intention of assessing whether the theoretical research on the two constructs can be mutually informative to the study of children in poverty. In the first section of the chapter, I present a general overview of the children's coping literature with three subsections discussing, respectively, classification of coping responses, coping efficacy and children's coping research in the context of poverty. Then, I discuss the relevance and limitations of the coping theoretical research in relation to the present study. In the second section, I

present a review and critique of the children's risk and resilience literature. I begin this task with a discussion of the historical overview of the construct of resilience including its definition and major developments in the literature. This is followed by a discussion of two broad approaches to resilience in the existing studies: a "universalistic approach", which conceives resilience (and its related concepts, risk and protective factors) as a uniformly constructed and defined construct across cultures and a "social constructionist approach", which regards resilience as a culturally and contextually specific construct. Then, after assessing the relevance and limitations of the risk and resilience theoretical research in relation to the present study, I conclude the chapter by highlighting three aspects of the 'coping' and 'resilience' theoretical frameworks that are relevant to the present study. I also suggest ways of dealing with the limitations of existing studies on children's coping and resilience.

## **3.2. Review and Critique of Research on Children's Coping**

### **3.2.1. Overview of research on children's coping**

Since the 1970s coping with stress has been a central area of interest within psychology (see Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004, for a review). Nevertheless, as yet there is little agreement on what coping really means. The definition of coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as "the person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141) has been the basis for the vast majority of adults' and children's coping research (Tennen et al., 2000). According to Folkman and colleagues (1986), this definition is based on three assumptions. First, *coping is a process*: it is about what the person actually *thinks* and *does* in a specific stressful encounter and the ways this situation changes as the encounter unfolds. Second, *coping is contextual*: it is influenced by the person's appraisal of the actual demands in the encounter and resources for managing them. Third, *coping does not necessarily imply successful outcome*: it is about a person's efforts to manage demands, whether or not the efforts are successful.

More recently, however, multicultural perspectives on stress and coping have received attention (e.g. Aldwin et al, 1996; Wong et al, 2006). In Wong and Wong (2006) edited book, *Handbook of Multicultural Perspectives of Stress and Coping*, for example, the role of cultures in shaping the experiences of stress and coping is highlighted. It is argued that "Euro-American psychology of stress and coping" is inadequate to explain how people in

other cultures cope with the demands of their lives. In depicting the cultural bias of the construct of stress, Wong et al. (2006), for instance, argue that the scale and magnitude of some of the problems such as HIV and AIDS experienced by Africans and Asians cannot be adequately explained by a Euro-American psychological definitions of stress (for example, the one provided by Lazarus and Folkman 1984). This is because these definitions are often developed having non-chronic stressors such as acute childhood illness in mind. They suggest including “suffering” as a distinct construct in the psychological stress and coping literature and argue for a *cultural* and *situational* understanding of stress. In relation to coping, the authors emphasized the inadequacy of concepts of coping, which are merely based on individual efforts, and they proposed concepts such as collective and collectivistic coping which, they believe, help to incorporate the values and practices of collectivistic cultures.

Bearing in mind the cultural and situational nature of stress and coping, I think, the conceptualization of coping offered by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is helpful to understand how poor children respond to and deal with what they perceive as risks to their wellbeing. Its emphasis on cognitive appraisal means that coping occurs in the context of a situation that is appraised as damaging or harmful by the individual who does the coping. Therefore, if used to understand the situation of children in poverty, it underlines the importance of asking the children (rather than assuming) what they consider as threats to their wellbeing. Its focus on what a person *thinks* and *does* in the context of what she considers as stressful also calls for methodologies that bring to centre-stage the perspectives and personal experiences of the person herself.

### **3.2.2. Classification of coping responses**

Differences in the conceptualization of coping among coping researchers have led to some diversity in the ways in which coping has been classified. In their recent review of the coping literature, Compas and colleagues (2001), for example, note:

“In spite of the clear need to distinguish among the dimensions or subtypes of coping, there has been little consensus regarding the dimensions or categories that best discriminate among different coping strategies in childhood and adolescence. First, researchers have debated whether it is best to consider general dimensions on which coping responses vary as opposed to specific categories or subtypes of coping. Second, there has been debate regarding which dimensions and categories best represent the variability in coping” (p.5)



In their review and critique of the coping literature, Skinner et al (2003) also note two approaches to classifying ways of coping: “deductive or top-down approaches” which use ‘higher order categories’ to organize various ‘lower order categories’ of coping and “inductive or bottom-up approaches” which classifies instances of coping into specific categories or ‘lower order categories’ of coping. The most widely used “higher order categories” also called dimensions of coping are the **problem-versus emotion focused dichotomy** (e.g. Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, 1984), the **engagement (approach) –versus-disengagement (avoidance) dichotomy** (e.g. Moss, 1988 cited in Roecker et al, 1996) and the **primary-versus secondary dichotomy** (e.g. Rothbaum et al, 1982).

The **problem-versus emotion focused dichotomy** classifies coping responses according to their function either as those aimed at modifying the stressor to make it less stressful (i.e. problem-focused) or those aimed at regulating the emotional states that arise from the stressor (i.e. emotion-focused). Examples of problem-focused coping are seeking information, generating possible solutions to a problem and taking actions to change the conditions that are creating stress. Examples of emotion-focused coping are positive reappraisal, seeking comfort and support from others, and trying to avoid the source of stress.

The **engagement (approach) -versus disengagement (avoidance) dichotomy** classifies coping responses according to their orientation either as those oriented toward a stressor (i.e. approach-focused) or those that are oriented away from a stressor in order to avoid it (i.e. avoidance-focused). Approach-focused coping responses include cognitive efforts to change ways of thinking about the stress or behavioural efforts to tackle the source/s of stress. Avoidance-focused coping responses include cognitive withdrawal or denial and behavioural attempts to escape or avoid confronting the situation.

The **primary- versus secondary dichotomy** classifies coping responses according to their goal and nature either as those aimed at influencing objective events/conditions and directly regulating one’s emotions or as those aimed at maximizing one’s fit to current conditions. The former is called primary control and includes coping responses such as problem solving and regulated emotional expression. The latter is called secondary control and includes coping response such as acceptance and cognitive restructuring.

The three “higher order categories” or dimensions of coping described above have been widely used by child coping researchers to structure the coping responses of children (Skinner et al., 2003). However, they have been equally criticized for being too broad, for placing many varied types of coping into just two general categories and for masking the complexity of different subtypes of coping (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). In *Handbook of Multicultural Perspectives of Stress and Coping*, Chun and colleagues (2006) also criticize these categories for their primary focus on the individual. They propose a distinction between coping that occurs at the individual level versus the collective. The latter is believed to be particularly relevant in collective culture such as communities in Asia and Africa. In outlining the difference between collective coping and social support in order to illustrate its additional explanatory power, they note:

“On the surface, collective coping appears to be very similar to utilizing social support, but that is not necessarily true as social support is only one of the many ways that collective coping can take place. In individual coping, individuals seek support to boost their ability and resources to cope with the stressor. In collective coping, the stressor *becomes* an in-group problem, and every member takes an active role in tackling the problem with a sense of responsibility that is different from providing emotional or instrumental support as a third party who is not directly affected by the stressor”(p. 47)

Alternatively, after analyzing measures of coping used during the past 20 years, Skinner et al (2003) compiled 400 lower order ways of coping used thus far. They then developed 13 ‘families of coping’, which they claim “cover much of the range of ways of coping studied thus far” (p. 241). These are:

Table 2: Families of coping from Skinner, Edge, Altman and Sherwood (2003)

No.	Families of coping	Description
1.	<b>Problem solving</b>	Problem solving includes approach and problem focused categories of instrumental action, strategizing, and problem solving. Many other closely related ways of coping are also considered part of this family, such as planning, logical analysis, effort, persistence, and determination
2.	<b>Seeking support</b>	Seeking support includes a wide array of targets for support (e.g., parents, spouses, peers, professionals, and God) and a variety of goals in going to people (e.g., instrumental help, advice, comfort, and contact)
3.	<b>Escape–avoidance</b>	Avoidance or escape includes efforts to disengage or stay away from the stressful transaction. It includes lower order ways of coping, such as cognitive avoidance, avoidant actions, denial, and wishful thinking.

No.	Families of coping	Description
4.	<b>Distraction</b>	Distraction refers to active attempts to deal with a stressful situation by engaging in an alternative pleasurable activity. It includes a wide variety of alternative activities, such as hobbies, exercise, watching TV, seeing friends, or reading
5.	<b>Cognitive restructuring</b>	Positive cognitive restructuring refers to active attempts to change one's view of a stressful situation in order to see it in a more positive light. It includes lower order ways of coping, such as focus on the positive, positive thinking, optimism, and minimization of distress or negative consequences
6.	<b>Rumination</b>	Rumination refers to a passive and repetitive focus on the negative and damaging features of a stressful transaction. It includes lower order ways of coping, such as intrusive thoughts, negative thinking, catastrophizing, anxiety amplification, self-blame, and fear.
7.	<b>Helplessness</b>	Helplessness refers to a set of actions organized around giving up or the relinquishment of control. Lower order ways of coping include passivity, confusion, cognitive interference or exhaustion, dejection, and pessimism
8.	<b>Social withdrawal</b>	Social withdrawal refers to actions aimed at staying away from other people or preventing other people from knowing about a stressful situation or its emotional effects. It encompasses lower order ways of coping such as social isolation, avoiding others, concealment, stoicism, and emotional withdrawal
9.	<b>Emotion regulation</b>	Emotional regulation refers to active attempts to influence emotional distress and to express emotions at the appropriate time and place constructively. Lower order ways of coping might include self-encouragement and comforting, emotional control, relaxation, and emotional expression
10.	<b>Information seeking</b>	Information seeking refers to attempts to learn more about a stressful situation or condition, including its course, causes, consequences, and meanings as well as strategies for intervention and remediation
11.	<b>Negotiation</b>	Negotiation refers to active attempts to work out a compromise between the priorities of the individual and the constraints of the situation. It includes lower order ways of coping such as priority setting, proposing a compromise, persuasion, reducing demands, trade-offs, and deal making
12.	<b>Opposition</b>	Opposition describes a family that includes lower order ways of coping such as projection, reactance, anger, aggression, discharge, venting, and blaming of others
13.	<b>Delegation</b>	Delegation includes lower order categories such as dependency, maladaptive help seeking, complaining, whining, and self-pity

### 3.2.3. Coping efficacy

What constitutes effective and ineffective coping or “coping efficacy” has been one of the major issues in coping research (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). Nonetheless, the issue of determining which coping responses are effective or ineffective remains difficult

(Somerfield and McCrae 2000). Lazarus and Folkman (1984 cited in Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004: 753-4) argue that the effectiveness of coping responses depends on the demands of the situation/context (“a given coping process may be effective in one situation but not in another”) and that situation/context is dynamic (“what might be considered effective coping response at the outset of a stressful situation may be deemed ineffective later on”). This approach also presents two aspects as essential to the task of evaluating coping efficacy. The first is selection of appropriate outcomes and the second is taking into account the fit between coping and the demands of the situation.

Outcomes can be selected by the person who is doing the coping (based on their significance to her) or by the researcher (based on their relevance to the question at hand). In addition, they can be evaluated either by asking the person doing the coping (her appraisal of the efficacy of her own coping efforts) or observer (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). In terms of the fit between the demands of the situation and coping, in the literature, the most frequently used dimension to assess effectiveness is what is called “the goodness of fit” (the fit between the appraisal of controllability of a stressor by the individual and coping). Problem-focused or primary control coping is related to lower levels of emotional distress in response to stressful situations that are appraised as controllable by the individual, while emotion-focused or secondary control coping is related to lower emotional distress in response to stressful situations that are viewed as beyond personal control (Compas, 1998). In emphasizing the need to contextualize coping, Chun and colleagues (2006) argue that the evaluation of coping efficacy should also include an assessment of the individual’s cultural values in addition to the goodness of person-environment fit. The concept of “coping flexibility” (people’s ability to modify their coping according to the demands of the situation they face) is also considered relevant in the discussion of children’s coping efficacy.

#### **3.2.4. Children coping with poverty related stress**

The bulk of literature on children’s coping focuses on common and non-chronic stressors such as acute childhood illness (e.g. Weisz et al, 1994) and interparental conflict (e.g. Kerig, 2001). However, a growing number of studies have applied the theoretical concept of coping to children who experience chronic stressful situations such as chronic poverty or low socio-economic status (e.g. Wadsworth and Compas, 2002; Van der Hoek, 2005). Using survey data, Wadsworth and Compas (2002), quantitatively analysed how poor and

working class adolescents from rural New England cope with economic adversity and family conflict, and how coping with these stressors is related to psychological adjustment. Building on the work of Conger and colleagues' (1994), they proposed a model that conceptualizes coping as a mediator of the relation between stress and psychological adjustment, as indicated in the figure below.

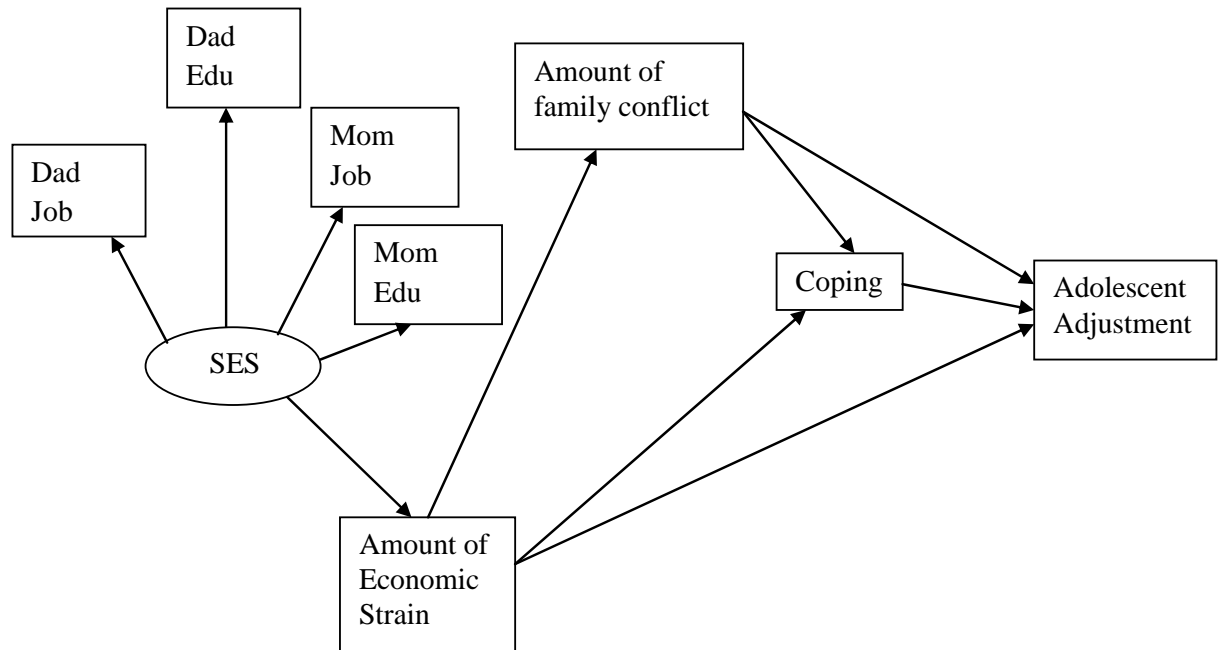


Figure 3: A model that predicts adolescent adjustment from SES, economic strain, and family conflict, with coping as a mediator of the relation between stress and adjustment  
Source: Wadsworth and Compas (2002: 250)

Wadsworth and Compas argued that family economic hardship was related to psychological problems in adolescents such as anxiety and depression primarily through perceived economic strain and conflict among family members. Family conflict partially mediated the relation between economic strain and adolescents' negative adjustment, and coping further mediated the relation between family conflict and adjustment.

Based on a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews, Van der Hoek (2005) also investigated how poor 6-16 year old children in the Netherlands deal or cope with different poverty-related stressful experiences such as lack of food and clothing. She found that the children used a wide range of coping strategies including problem-solving, positive

reappraisal, problem avoidance and resignation depending on the various situations they encounter. She argued that the way the children cope with poverty affected the way they experienced poverty and “the combined action of mediating factors, personal experiences and coping strategies determines the impact of poverty on children’s lives” (pp. 36-37). It is noteworthy that in both of the above studies coping is conceptualized as a mediating factor in the relationship between poverty and its impact on the children’s wellbeing, albeit in different ways.

### ***Discussion: relevance to the present study and limitations***

The fundamental tenet of coping theory and research is that substantial individual differences exist in the outcomes of stressful experiences i.e. not all children who experience stressful situation show problematic outcomes. This is due in part to differences in the resources available to children and the methods they used to cope with adverse events (Compas, 1998). Thus, coping theory and research acknowledges children’s active role in dealing with the demands that stressful situations bring into their lives.

The Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model argues that coping occurs in the context of perceived stress and the ways in which children cope with stressful situations influence (or acts as a mediating factors in) the consequences of these stressful situations on their wellbeing, as indicated in the following figure.

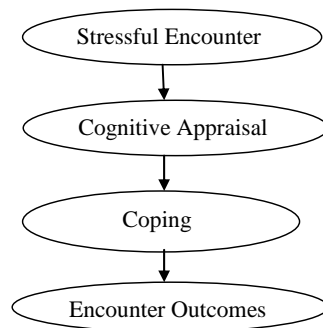


Figure 4: The relations among stress, cognitive appraisal, coping, and outcome

This perspective (i.e. an understanding of coping as mediator between encounter and outcome), as demonstrated by Wadsworth and Compas (2002) and Van der Hoek (2005), is

helpful to conceptualize the relationship between what the children interviewed in Addis Ababa perceived as risks and the impact of these risks on their sense of wellbeing.

However, coping research is not without problems. Somerfield and McCrae (2000: 621), for example, note: “One does not have to look hard these days to find a critique of research on stress and coping. The coping literature has been characterized by various authors as ‘disappointing’, ‘tentative’, ‘modest’, ‘sterile’, ‘stagnated’, and ‘trivial’”. The major criticism of coping research is that its theory and methodology is relatively disconnected. Somerfield and McCrae (2000), for example, argue that although the most popular approach to coping (i.e. that of Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) is process-oriented, most of the studies that use this model employ methodologies that cannot capture the dynamic nature of coping i.e. most of them are based on cross-sectional designs . Wong et al (2006) also argue that in existing stress and coping studies, context (especially cultural context) is frequently ignored and they go on to argue:

“The lack of progress in stress and coping research has been attributed to theoretical and methodological limitations [...]. However, we believe that the hegemony of Euro-American psychology is not necessarily healthy for the field, especially when it is dominated by a single paradigm [that of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model]” (p. 5)

I share their view that culture is important in the study of stress and coping. A number of studies have documented that culture not only shapes the kinds of stress people face but also what they perceive as stressful, and how they respond to and deal with it (e.g. Aldwin, 2004). But I also believe that some of the existing models of stress and coping, particularly that of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), could provide a good framework to analyze people’s responses to perceived stressful situations, if the people’s perceptions and experiences of coping are brought to centre stage and if the people’s context and culture are taken into account. Coping research has also been criticised for a lack of precision regarding conceptualization of its important concepts such as coping efficacy (Somerfield and McCrae, 2000) and its neglect of positive outcomes e.g. the way adversity can strengthen and develop (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004).

### **3.3. Review and Critique of Children’s Risk and Resilience Literature**

There are two broad approaches with regard to resilience in the existing research literature. One is what we might call a “universalistic approach”, which conceives of resilience (and

its related concepts, risk and protective factors) as uniformly defined across cultures. The other model is what we might call a “social constructionist approach”, which regards resilience as a culturally and contextually specific construct. The first model is the older and the more influential of the two. The second model is relatively recent and still somewhat marginal. My approach in this section is to discuss the tension between the two models in studies of childhood risk and resilience after a brief historical overview of the construct of resilience. Then, I assess the relevance and limitations of the current risk and resilience literature in relation to the present study.

### **3.3.1. Historical overview of resilience**

The concept of resilience was first used in applied physics and engineering to describe the capacity of materials that resume their original shape after having been deformed under stress (Boyden and Mann, 2005). By the 1970s, it started to be used in Clinical Psychology to explain a group of people with schizophrenia who showed competence (Masten et al., 1991). In relation to children, studies of children of schizophrenic mothers played a crucial role in the emergence of childhood resilience as a major theoretical and empirical topic during the 1960s and 1970s. Norman Garmezy, E. James Anthony and Michael Rutter were the prominent scientists who studied resilience among children of schizophrenics at the time (Luthar, 2006). Their approach marked a shift from an earlier focus on children’s risk for psychopathology (for example, children’s likelihood of developing mental disorders as a result of having a mother with a mental health problem) to a focus on resilient or positive outcomes and the factors that foster them in the context of adversity.

The Werner and Smith (1982, 1992, 2001) study of children at risk has been regarded by many as seminal. It began in 1955 with 505 individuals on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, starting with their births and continuing with surveys and measures at regular intervals over the next 32 years. Their book, *Vulnerable but Invincible* (Werner and Smith, 1982) focuses on the lives of these individuals at age 18 when some of them (approximately one-third of the total sample) developed positive outcomes such as competence, confidence and caring despite high risk situations: poverty, prenatal stress and unhealthy caretaking environments. Particularly, it compared the lives of these resilient youngsters with those youngsters of the same age and sex who developed coping problems. They found that unlike those youngsters who developed coping problems, resilient youngsters were able to “elicit predominately positive responses from their environments” (Werner and Smith: 1992: 2). Werner and



Smith (1992, 2001) also identified a number of protective factors such as family cohesion and network of kin and friends that counterbalanced risk factors to lead to positive or resilient outcomes (see also Garmezy and Rutter, 1983). Following these early studies, later research on resilience expanded to include multiple adverse conditions such as socio-economic disadvantage and associated risks.

### **3.3.2. Key areas of debate that led to a shift in resilience research**

During the 1980s and early 1990s, there were several changes in the main conceptual approaches to studying resilience, four of which were particularly significant:

- *Resilience: an inborn trait or an acquired competency?*

In earlier studies, there was the view that resilience is largely determined by innate factors, and is therefore unaffected by interaction with the environment (Harvey and Delfabbro, 2004). Thus, in most of the earlier studies the effort had been to identify the personal qualities of resilient children such as autonomy. However, subsequent studies (e.g. Cicchetti and Garmezy, 1993) demonstrated that resilience may often derive from factors external to the child. Three sets of factors thus came to be commonly cited as important for resilience: attributes of the children themselves; aspects of their families, and characteristics of their social environments (Luthar, 2006).

- *Protective factors or protective processes?*

Recently, the focus of empirical work has shifted away from identifying protective factors to understanding protective processes. Luthar et al (2000: 544) note, “Rather than simply studying which child, family, and environmental factors are involved in resilience” the tendency is now to understand how protective factors bring about positive outcomes. This is particularly reflected in longitudinal studies such as Werner and Smith (2001) who documented the lives of resilient individuals for an extended period.

- *Resilience: a static concept or a dynamic construct?*

In some early writings, the term “invulnerable” was used to refer to individuals who did well despite adversity (e.g. Anthony, 1973; Werner and Smith, 1982). Recently, it is recognized that this term conceived of people’s ability to do well in the face of adversity as unconditional and unchanging. So gradually, researchers began to use the term “resilience” instead and recognize that resilience is dynamic with new risk factors and strengths emerging in response to changing life situations (Luthar et al., 2000).

- *Resilience: an overarching concept or a circumscribed construct?*

In the past, studies generally relied on multiple behavioural indices (such as school grades, and rating by parents, peers and teachers) to study childhood resilience. The assumption in using such indices was that children who showed successful coping behaviours also have good underlying coping skills and these translate into observable outcomes (Luthar, 1993). However, recent studies on resilience have indicated that children can seem resilient in terms of their behaviour but still might struggle with internal problems such as depression and anxiety (Luthar, 2006). Even taking into consideration only domains of behavioural coping, Luthar (2006) notes that children who display resilience in one aspect or domain do not necessarily show the same result in other domains. In view of this, therefore, she notes, researchers have begun to use more careful terms that specify domains in which resilience is seen, referring, for example, to academic resilience, social resilience or emotional resilience.

### **3.3.3. What is resilience?**

Since its inception during the second half of the twentieth century, the construct of resilience has been variously defined. According to Harvey and Delfabbro (2004:4), “Somewhat frustratingly, the meaning of the term resilience appears to vary considerably, not only across studies, but also across time and according to the theoretical context or participant group under investigation”. Werner and Smith (2001: 3), for example, conceptualize resilience as “an end product of buffering processes that do not eliminate risks and adverse conditions in life but allow the individual to deal with them effectively”. The advantage of this definition is that it not only conceptualizes resilience as a process but also relates it with the concept of coping, which is about how individuals deal with stressful situations. Nevertheless, it does not explicitly mention or give attention to issues of culture and context. Therefore, in this study, following Ungar (2008: 225) I conceptualize resilience as “the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways”. Here, not only the importance of culture in the process of resilience is highlighted but also the need to see resilience as more than an

individual capacity; it includes the efforts of the individual's family, community, and culture.

Despite variation in definition, all resilience researchers, however, share the basic assumption that people's resilience can be conceptualized as resulting from the interplay of risk and protective factors (Harvey and Delfabbro, 2004: 4).

#### **3.3.4. What are risk and protective factors?**

*Risk factors* are hazards that increase the likelihood that a child will experience negative developmental outcomes (Werner and Smith, 1992). In most studies, it is indicated that risk factors can be found within the child, family, the neighbourhood, and in societal structures. In relation to risk factors, two observations have been strongly mentioned in recent resilience studies. First, multiple risk factors are more likely to lead to deleterious outcomes, that is, some risk factors are additive and others interact to negatively impact outcomes. Second, risk factors are not uniform and can have different effects. A risk factor for one group of individuals may be a protective factor for others or even for the same group in different contexts (Ungar, 2003, 2004).

*Protective factors* are conditions or processes that modify the effects of risks in order to lead to positive or resilient outcomes (Garmezy et al., 1984). Protective factors operate in three ways. First, they may serve to buffer risks, providing protection against negative effects. Second, they may interrupt the processes through which risks operate. Third, they may prevent the initial occurrence of risks. In the literature, protective factors are discussed at three levels: at the levels of the child, the family and the community.

#### **3.3.5. Resilience: a universalized concept or a culturally and contextually specific construct?**

As some researchers (notably Ungar, 2004: 342) have pointed out, the majority of resilience studies were undertaken with the implicit assumption that risk and resilience are constructed and defined uniformly across cultures. With this assumption in mind, most studies had been engaged with identifying factors that are believed to have a significant influence on risk and resilience in children. These factors were discussed in the literature at three levels: at the child, family and community level. Some of the most commonly cited protective child attributes were intelligence, temperament, self-regulation, self-esteem and self-efficacy. At the family level, the presence of a close relationship with at least one

parent was consistently mentioned. Positive peer relationships, social organization processes in the neighbourhood and institutions like school were often mentioned at the community level (see Luthar, 2006, for a detailed review of these studies)

According to Ungar, most of these studies presuppose “a predictable relationship between risk and protective factors, circular causality and transactional processes” (2004: 342). That means, if A, B and C are present in the face of adversity a positive outcome will result and the inverse relationship is true (McAdam-Crisp et al, 2005). Within this de-contextualized and universalized approach, Ungar argues, resilience is defined simply as “health despite adversity” (p. 342).

Typically, such studies have employed quantitative research methods, particularly cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. Most survey studies were variable centred. That is, in terms of analysis they focused on the relationships among variables such as risk and protective factors. In variable-centred analyses, the analysis relied on either main effect models (direct links of protective factors with competence outcomes) or those involving interaction effects (interaction of protective factors with stress to determine if protective factors might benefit children at high stress more than those at low stress might benefit). The other approach, which we find in most of these studies, is the person-centred approach. The person-centred approach entails identifying individuals with high adversity and high competence, and comparing them with others e.g., low adversity, high competence (see also Luthar, 1993). Longitudinal studies (such as Werner and Smith, 1982, 1992) have provided the richest quantitative data about resilience.

Within this “universalistic” approach, three major theoretical frameworks have guided much of the existing resilience research. The first is the one identified by Garmezy (1993) and Werner and Smith (1982, 1992) in which prominent protective and vulnerability processes affecting at risk children are viewed as operating at three broad levels: at the level of the community, the family and the child. A second set of guiding perspectives consists of those focused on transactions between the ecological context and the developing child (e.g. Cicchetti and Lynch’s, 1993 integrative ecological-transactional model cited in Luthar et al., 2000). The third theory is the structural-organizational perspective (e.g. Cicchetti and Schneider-Rosen, 1986 cited in Ibid.) which assumes that there are generally continuity and coherence in the unfolding of competence over time.

Recently, however, the ways in which research has been done within this “universalistic” approach to resilience has come under increasing criticism and challenge by prominent scholars such as Michael Ungar and Jo Boyden. One of the major arguments put forward by these scholars is that “resilience” as defined and used in these studies is based on a Euro-American-centred conception of childhood. As a result, they argue, the definition of resilience in most studies is heavily biased towards the sorts of outcomes emphasised in an individualistic culture. Ungar writes:

Framed within a positivist paradigm, proponents of an ecological model must necessarily choose arbitrary distinctions of what are to be accepted as evidences of healthy functioning. Such arbitrariness is more the result of ethnocentrism than cross-cultural study that questions the hegemony of Western middle class norms (Ungar, 2004:345).

Boyden and Mann (2005) even go to the extent of questioning the usefulness of resilience as a theoretical construct:

Although we use the term resilience here in recognition of its utility as a device for indicating a state that many of us recognize intuitively, we do not regard it as a sound theoretical construct. Indeed, we maintain that resilience may, following further enquiry, appear to be a sensible construct only in certain very limited cultural and intellectual contexts (p.10).

Thus, recently the general tendency among resilience researchers from a qualitative background is to emphasise the cultural and contextual specificity of the construct. In this respect, Ungar (2004) has been the most earnest and the most consistent in refusing to take for granted the de-contextualised and universalised conception of resilience. His social constructionist approach to the study of resilience culminated in his influential work *Nurturing Hidden Resilience in Troubled Youth* (2004). In this work, Ungar defines resilience as “successful negotiation by individuals for health resources, with success depending for its definition on the reciprocity individuals experience between themselves and the social constructions of well-being that shape their interpretations of their health status” (p. 352). For Ungar, therefore, resilience is not something that can be arbitrarily designated without taking into consideration the relative “discursive power” of those involved in the meaning construction process. In other words, the definition of risk and resilience depends on the relative power of the one doing the defining and the one being

defined, “if I am convinced I am healthy despite the adversity I face, and I am capable of convincing others of my health status, then I am healthy” (2005: 153).

The social constructionist approach to the study of risk and resilience grew out of postmodernism, which as a field of thought refutes essentialism, the notion that there is an underlying truth to what we accept as reality. Instead, social constructionists, following the lead of theorists such as Michel Foucault and Kenneth Gergen conceive of people’s experiences as dependent on interaction with others and the language that is collectively generated to describe that experience (Ungar, 2001: 61-62).

Ungar identified two shortcomings in relation to the existing studies of resilience. The first is arbitrariness in the selection of outcome variables and, second, the limited attention paid to the socio-cultural context in which resilience occurs. The use of predetermined health outcomes, which is required by the use of survey data, he argues, obscures the resilience of those at risk children who use ‘seemingly’ negative or destructive resources for their advantage:

“Until we better understand children’s strategies for resilience we will mistake our children’s efforts for survival to be signs of dangerous, delinquent, deviant or disordered behaviour. Children have shown me that problematic behaviours are still a search for health” (2005: 2).

According to Boyden and Mann, the use of predetermined indicators of resilience also undermines children’s perspectives on their resilience. As a result, they argue, children’s resilience is often taken as “the absence of pathology rather than the presence of personal agency in children” (2005:11).

Studies that support a constructionist interpretation of resilience have hitherto been conducted within the qualitative research paradigm. Ungar (2003: 92-97) identifies five potential advantages of qualitative resilience research. First, it discovers “unnamed processes”, that is, new information that might contradict one’s assumptions. Second, it examines health phenomena in context. Third, it gives voice to marginalized groups such as children. Fourth, it produces “thick descriptions” of lives lived to allow for the selective transfer of findings between contexts rather than generalization or replication. Fifth, it helps to challenge researcher standpoint bias that orients findings toward an adult-centric perspective.

### **3.3.6. Resilience: “Universal” and “local”**

Findings from the International Resilience Project (IRP), a multiyear 14 site mixed methods study of over 1500 youth in five continents, show that there were aspects of children’s resilience both shared by children across research sites as well as those that were particularly relevant to one site (Ungar, 2008). The concepts that were examined and found to be universally relevant to studying resilience across cultures and contexts included self-betterment and forgiveness (Ungar, 2006: 4). The team members used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research methods included interviews, observation and focus group discussion while the quantitative aspect of the research was based on the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM), which was developed by the team.

When one considers such findings, it is not difficult to see not only the global applicability of the concept but also how differently it is specified and valued in different cultures and contexts. A mixed method approach as exemplified by the International Resilience Project is a useful way of studying similarities and differences within and across cultures. However, with regard to resilience presently we know very little about children in non-western contexts and cultures (Boyden and Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2008). Therefore, we need far more research to be done in non-western contexts and cultures, which gives special attention to culturally and contextually specific aspects of resilience. Towards this end and because of my desire to limit the scope of my research, my study uses qualitative research paradigm focusing on a small sample of children with the aim of giving primacy to children’s subjective meanings of their experiences which are embedded in their context and culture.

#### ***Discussion: relevance to the present study and limitations***

Theoretically, the concept of resilience provides a useful way of accounting for variations in the risks that poor children face, their responses and the impact of these risks on their wellbeing. Resilience is a superordinate concept subsuming two aspects: ‘risk’ and ‘successful outcome’ (Luthar, 2006). One can only talk about resilience after making sure that there is a significant risk to well-being. So, in a way, unlike dominant approaches to child poverty which proceed with the assumption that poverty is a risk to children’s wellbeing, a child-centred analysis of risk and resilience allows room to explore the kinds

of issues poor children identify as risks without necessarily taking for granted that poverty is a risk to their wellbeing. Resilience is also about individual variations in response to risk. Not all children who face risk become overwhelmed by it and again not all children who face risk do well (Rutter, 1987). Through the concept of *protective factors* that it brings to the discussion, resilience helps us to explain why some children do well despite experiencing risk. Equally importantly, the construct of resilience helps us to recognize children as competent social agents not entirely dependent on others for their survival and development (Boyden and Cooper, 2007).

Ironically, in most of the existing studies on children's resilience, children are deprived of agency. This happens in two different ways. First, in most of the studies, *risk* and *resilience* are defined from the perspectives of adults. Secondly, in the discussion of external protective factors, children are treated simply as passive recipients of the external environment with little agency of their own. Because risk is defined based on what adults conceive to be risky for children, those children who exhibit 'successful outcomes' despite this risk are classified as resilient. There is, however, a possibility that what adults perceive to be risky might not be perceived as such by the children themselves. Moreover, in the absence of subjectively perceived risk, it is difficult to talk about resilience since the meaning children attach to their experience is an important moderator of its effect on their wellbeing (Boyden and Cooper, 2007; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Similarly, the resilience of children who do face risks which adults might not consider risks tends to be overlooked.

What is more, in almost all studies of resilience, 'successful outcome' or 'positive adaptation' is defined in relation to *explicit behavioural success* as judged by others (often by adults such as parents and teachers). In most cases, researchers use what are called 'developmental tasks' as key criteria. For instance, 'positive adaptation' among young children was defined in relation to the development of a secure attachment with primary caregivers (Luthar, 2006) and among older children, in terms of good academic performance and positive relationships with classmates and teachers (Ibid). The primary consideration for classifying children as '*resilient*' or '*non-resilient*' tends to be the degree to which they conform to adult expectations regarding these developmental tasks. This raises two questions: first, what standard should be used to define 'positive adaptation' and second, who should define it. The first question, that of whether 'positive adaptation'



should be defined based on external criteria (such as academic success) or internal criteria (psychological well-being or low levels of distress) or both, has for sometime been a subject of debate among resilience researchers. For instance, in her studies of inner-city adolescents, Luthar (1991) found that young adolescents living in seriously threatening situations but are highly competent in terms of external criteria (grades, conduct, etc.) tend to have high levels of internal distress. Yet, she suggested that resilience should be assessed based on “behaviourally manifested successes at negotiating salient developmental tasks in spite of underlying emotional distress” (Luthar, 1993: 442). This, in my thinking, overlooks not only the possibility of internal and external states of wellbeing influencing each other but also the fact that emotional distress will sooner or later affect behaviourally manifested successes. Wolf (1995 cited in Harvey and Delfabbro, 2004) has also expressed concern regarding definitions of resilience that emphasize behavioural success at the expense of other important aspects of an individual’s wellbeing.

With regard to the question of whether ‘positive adaptation’ should be defined subjectively or objectively, there has likewise been no resolution in the literature. For instance, Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) who address several criticisms levelled at resilience as a construct nonetheless leave this question open remarking only that “concerns about subjective rating are ubiquitous in Psychological research and are not unique to studies of resilience” (p.550). As a result, after more than three decades of research on resilience we still do not know much about the extent to which children themselves subjectively experience it or about the ways in which resilience relates to their feelings of happiness or unhappiness. Luthar (2006) has noted that even in those studies of resilience where children’s subjective feelings of unhappiness are considered, children are rarely asked about their own perceptions or feelings.

Regarding external protective factors, most studies of resilience proceed from an assumption that they are very independent of children’s actions, thus overlooking children’s own contributions to the creation of these factors. For instance, positive peer relationship is often mentioned as an important protective factor in most studies of resilience but hardly any of these studies explored the ways in which children’s own behaviour or action shapes peer responses and hence produces the peer relationship that they experience. Positive peer relationship is often presented as if it is a product of chance or luck rather than of reciprocal interactions between the children and their peers. This is true even for those studies that

adopt an ecological-transactional model. According to Masten, this oversight is related to the methods that these studies employ. For her, “many of these variable-focused models do not accommodate the bidirectional nature of influence in living systems” (2001: 230).

The approaches to risk and resilience that I have described above are predominantly rooted in conceptualizations of children and childhood informed by Western (and mainly North American and European) experiences (Ungar, 2004, 2008; Boyden and Mann, 2005). These conceptualizations are premised on the idea that childhood as a life phase is characterized by vulnerability and dependence (Boyden, 2003). These notions of vulnerability and dependence have implications for the ways in which questions are framed and subjects of research determined. First, ‘vulnerability’ implies that because children are weak, adults should be responsible for their protection; that as part of this protection process, adults should identify what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for children. Second, ‘dependence’ implies that because children are capable of doing nothing for themselves adults have a duty to support them. In both contexts, it is noteworthy that children are presented as passive recipients of adult support.

Nevertheless, this conceptualization of children and childhood does not work for a very significant number of children in countries like Ethiopia where children frequently find themselves responsible not only for themselves but also for other members of the family. Ethiopian children from well-to-do families may of course have experiences similar to middle class children in Europe or North America and might bear little or no responsibilities for themselves or for others. However, for many poor Ethiopian children adult support tends to be *conditional* (for example, they might be expected to do certain tasks for parents and neighbours before getting material support from them) and, for some, it might simply be *non-existent*. Most children who obtain some support from adults would be expected to carry a variety of responsibilities before they could claim any such support. These responsibilities would very often include, but are by no means limited to, contributing to the family economy through domestic or paid work. It would, therefore be quite meaningless in this context to talk about external protective factors without taking into account children’s own contributions.

The other major limitation of the resilience research, according to Boyden and Cooper (2007), is that it focuses too much on individual functioning at the expense of broader structural and social dimensions that are very useful for a holistic understanding of people’s

experiences of adversity. In addition, practically speaking, they note, this emphasis on the individual and the things she can or should do to overcome adversity “de-politicises the project of poverty reduction” (p. 5). In my view, to some extent this problem can be resolved by adopting a broader conceptualization of resilience such as the one developed by the International Resilience Project. Drawing on findings from the International Resilience Project, Ungar et al (2008) conceptualize resilience as involving three aspects:

“First, the capacity of individuals to *navigate* to resources that sustain well-being; second, the capacity of individuals’ physical and social ecologies to *provide* these resources; and third, the capacity of individuals, their families, and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared” (p. 2)

This definition clearly puts resilience as more than dependent on individual functioning or as individual’s capacity to cope with adversity. It incorporates what the person’s community can or should do to help the person nurture or sustain her wellbeing, although it does not look at the political economic factors that determine whether the person’s community is able to provide this (see Hart, 2008, for more on this).

As I indicated earlier, in this study, I approach resilience qualitatively. This is because I believe that qualitative research methods are helpful to bring out the perspectives of children on the risks they face and their resilience. Because of their exploratory nature, qualitative methods are also valuable to produce culturally and contextually relevant data. In this regard, I share most of the concerns put forward by Ungar (2004; 2005), and Boyden and Mann (2005) concerning existing studies on resilience. I believe that arbitrariness in the selection of outcome variables will result in Euro-American bias and the undermining of children’s perspectives. This is because almost all of the existing studies on resilience were done in the context of Europe and North America and in the absence of findings from other countries (non-western), it is impossible for researchers not to be biased towards Euro-American conceptions of childhood when arbitrarily selecting outcome variables. Similarly, in the absence of children’s perspectives on their pathway to resilience most of these studies draw on adult’s conception of what constitutes risk and resilience for children.

However, my approach to resilience is different from the social constructionist approach of Ungar mainly in terms of emphasis. Because of my focus on the *subjective experiences* of children in poverty my research is *perceptual* in orientation (i.e. focus on children’s perceptions) as opposed to the constructionist tendency of Ungar. For instance, in my study

language is primarily taken as something which reveals the life world of participants (i.e. the means by which participants try to communicate/describe their experiences to me) while in Ungar's approach language is taken as the means by which the individual constructs reality (Ungar, 2004).

In this regard, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (i.e. IPA) as developed by Jonathan Smith (1996) informs my research. As a phenomenological study, my focus will be on children's personal perceptions and accounts of risk, coping and resilience, not on making objective statement(s) about these constructs. This study, therefore, does not look at risk, coping and resilience as expressed or defined by other people such as parents, teachers or even other children. Children who live in poverty, who are willing to talk about their experience, and who live in different situations of poverty (to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of child poverty) are, thus, at the heart of this study. This study is also informed by the theory of hermeneutics in that my interpretation of participants' accounts is taken as key to understanding their experiences. Although my approach to risk, coping and resilience is *perceptual* in orientation it does not, however, deny the constructed and social nature of experience. I recognize that children's subjectivity can be affected by their interaction with other people, including the researcher. However, analysing how children's interpretations of risk, coping and resilience are influenced is beyond the scope of this study.

### **3.4. Conclusion: 'Coping' and 'Resilience' Fit Best with a Qualitative Methodology**

Notwithstanding the many limitations that constructive critics of the existing studies on children's coping and resilience have brought to light, I find three aspects of the research on children's coping and resilience particularly useful and mutually informative for a child-centred understanding of risks and their impact on children's sense of wellbeing. First, research on both constructs allows room to explore the kinds of issues children living in poverty view as risks without necessarily taking for granted that poverty is a risk to their wellbeing. Second, research on both constructs acknowledges variability in children's outcomes: not all children who experience stressful situations or risks show problematic outcomes. Third, research on both constructs recognizes children's agency: children's active role in dealing with stressful situations or risks. All these perspectives, I believe, are helpful for a more comprehensive understanding of risks and their impact on children's

sense of wellbeing (e.g. by examining factors and processes that mediate and moderate children's experiences of risks).

I also believe that many of the limitations of the existing studies on coping and resilience are related to disconnection between their theory and methodology. For example, although the dominant model of coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) conceptualizes coping as a process, many of the existing coping studies used cross-sectional designs that cannot capture the dynamic nature of coping. Again, although childhood resilience is about agency (what children do in order to bring about positive or resilient outcomes), in most of the existing resilience studies children are deprived of their agency. I believe that a qualitative research design that incorporates the collection of data over an extended period is helpful to address some of these limitations. It not only brings out the dynamic nature of children's experiences and helps to bring to centre stage their perspectives and experiences, but also helps to situate their perspectives and experiences in a socio-cultural context. The following chapter discusses the research design and methodology of my study.

## **Chapter 4: Towards a Comprehensive and Contextualised Study of Children in Poverty: Approach and Methods<sup>7</sup>**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe in detail the choices I made in the construction of the study including selecting a site and informants, collecting, processing and analysing data. The chapter has three major sections, namely “The research design”, “The fieldwork process” and “Data analysis”. In the first section, “The research design”, I begin by presenting my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions, which shaped my choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Then, before moving to the next section, I describe my research site, child informants, how I obtained informed consent and the time frame of my fieldwork.

In the second section, “The fieldwork process”, after explaining the ethical approach to the study which includes subsections on ‘building rapport and gaining trust’, ‘negotiating privacy, anonymity and confidentiality’, ‘addressing power imbalance’ and ‘the use of incentives with children’, I critically reflect on the methods I selected, and discuss the advantages and limitations of the different methods I used. Specifically, I discuss why and how I used individual semi-structured interviews, diaries, drawings and timelines with the children.

In the third section, I present my approach to data analysis. I start the section by discussing my analysis of data from individual interviews with the children. This is subdivided into two sections: preliminary analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Then, before concluding the chapter, I discuss how I analyzed data from “task-based” methods and my use of case studies analysis.

### **4.2. The Research Design**

#### **4.2.1. Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological assumptions**

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) note that the selection of a research paradigm is predetermined by the investigator’s response to three fundamental and interconnected questions:

- a. *The ontological question.* What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?

- b. *The epistemological question.* What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?
- c. *The methodological question.* How can the inquirer (would be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?

Denzin and Lincoln (1998: pp. 200-1)

My ontological stance can be described as *realist* but socially situated or contextualized. It is *realist* because, like Smith (1996), I believe that what children in poverty say about their situation and daily experiences has some significance and “reality” for them. It reflects their mental as well as emotional state i.e. their thoughts and feelings about their overall situation. It is socially situated/ contextualized because I also believe that different children can perceive and experience their situation differently depending on their context. This is the case not only because poverty is not always the same in terms of its intensity and the kinds of things that it deprives children of (Van der Hoek, 2005) but also because children in different contexts can bring different thoughts, expectations and judgments to the same experience. So I perceived realities (what the children say about their situation in this case) as multiple, “socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 110-111).

I also recognize that I cannot look at things “through children’s eyes”. My understanding of how the children make sense of and construct their situation is necessarily influenced by the experiences (personal, academic, social etc) I brought to the research. In fact, I consider my “values” and “biases” as important elements of my understanding of the children’s perceptions and experiences. At the same time, I am aware that my perceptions and experiences are influenced by how the children make sense of and construct their situation. As Guba and Lincoln (2005, quoting Shulamit Reinharz 1997), argue I believe that “we not only bring the self to the field... [we also] create the self in the field” (p.314). Hence, my epistemological stance is “transactional and subjectivist” which assumes that the investigator and the object of investigation are “interactively linked” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111).

All this means I can only try to understand the children’s experiences by doing my own interpretation of their interpretation of their experiences. In terms of my methodological

position, therefore, I am close to what Guba and Lincoln (1994) called “hermeneutic/dialectic” i.e. “the reconstruction of previously held constructions” (p. 112).

The qualitative approach that has the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that I described above is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as discussed below.

#### **4.2.2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA: Smith, 1996) is a recently developed, and still developing (Willig, 2001; 2008), qualitative approach to research. It has been developed specifically in qualitative psychology in the UK. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (hereafter IPA) is informed by the theoretical assumptions and methods of *phenomenology*, *hermeneutics* and *symbolic interactionism*. In line with its phenomenological origins, IPA aims to explore the subjective meanings people ascribe to events or objects rather than attempting to give “objective statements” or representations of the objects or events themselves (Smith and Osborn, 2003:51). IPA researchers try to do this by analysing the accounts given by participants. The assumption here is that informants’ accounts reflect their underlying thoughts and beliefs and offer an insight into their personal and social worlds. Thus, IPA founder, Jonathan Smith, writes:

One may consider that what informants say does have some significance and “reality” for them beyond the bounds of this particular occasion, that it is part of their ongoing self-story and represents a manifestation of their psychological world, and it is this psychological reality that one is interested in. (Smith, 1995, p.10 quoted in Sinclair and Milner, 2005: 96)

But at the same time, corresponding to its connection to the interpretative or hermeneutic tradition, IPA acknowledges that gaining direct and complete access to research participants’ personal and social worlds is impossible. This is because the researcher’s understanding of participants’ thoughts is influenced by the researcher’s own view of the world (Smith, 2004) as well as the kind of relationship between the researcher and participants (Willig, 2001; 2008). Thus, IPA study involves a two- stage interpretation process or “double hermeneutics” where while “the participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world” (Smith, 2004: 40). Because of its emphasis on the meanings people ascribe to events and how they construct these meanings



in their personal and social worlds IPA is also influenced by symbolic interactionism (Smith and Osborn, 2003; Willig, 2008).

IPA has some links with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) such as in both approaches theory is generated from data (i.e. theories are empirically grounded in the data). Maybe because of this link, Brocki and Wearden (2006: 100) note, “IPA has been frequently contrasted with grounded theory, with some struggling to see any meaningful distinction between the two”. Nevertheless, as Willig (2001; 2008: 45) argues, IPA is different from grounded theory in that, unlike grounded theory which focuses on social processes taking a view “from the outside in”, it focuses on the psychological world of participants (their perspectives and experience) taking a view “from the inside out”. Smith (1996) also notes that, unlike grounded theory which employs theoretical sampling with the aim of going for different cases to expand the claims that can be made, IPA favours purposive homogeneous (according to either demographic variables or to pre-specified criteria) sampling with the aim of examining similarities and differences within this homogenous group. In any discussion of the differences and similarities between IPA and grounded theory it is also important to take into account that there are different versions of grounded theory (see Willig, 2008, for a discussion of this) and IPA has been understood and used in a number of different ways. The following table, which is taken from the Scottish IPA Research Interest Group, shows some more differences between IPA and grounded theory.

Table 3: Differences between IPA and Grounded theory

	<b>Grounded theory</b>	<b>IPA</b>
Sampling	Large sample Theoretical sampling Heterogeneous Stratified sampling	Case studies Small group studies Occasional large studies Purposive sampling Homogenous
Unit of analysis	‘Incidents’ Employ individual as unit of data collection but social process as unit of analysis Experience Social processes	Embrace and maintain the individual as a coherent mode of data collection and unit of analysis Experience Agency Thought/intentionality Emotions
Scope of analysis	Reflexivity Description	Interpretation Description

	<b>Grounded theory</b>	<b>IPA</b>
		Narrative Autobiographical
Ontology	Experiential Social	Experiential Meaning Critical realist
Epistemology	Nomothetic Objective Generalisability	Ideographic Cautious truth claims Relativist Contextualized Subjective Specificity Limited generalizability

Since its inception in the 1990s, IPA has been used in an increasing number of studies. It is popular particularly in health psychology research (e.g. Flowers et al., 2006; Osborn and Smith, 1998). However, IPA has also been used in social and clinical psychology research (e.g. Coyle and Rafalin, 2000; Golsworthy and Coyle, 1999). May be because IPA relies on having participants with a strong ability to communicate their experiences richly its use with small children has been limited. Nevertheless, a burgeoning number of unpublished theses and published studies (e.g. Costley, 2000; Riggs and Coyle, 2002) have utilized IPA with young people.

IPA is appropriate for the research questions I want to address in this thesis for the following reasons. First, IPA aims to study experience from the perspective/s of the research participant/s. Therefore, in order to explore how children who live in poverty make sense of and construct their situation IPA is suitable. Here, it is also important to note that IPA's commitment to "give voice" to research participant/s goes well with the approach of the "new social studies of childhood" that presents children as "experts" on their own lives, as described in chapter 1. Second, IPA recognizes that research or analysis is a product of interaction between the researcher and the participants, and it is both phenomenological (participants' accounts) and interpretative (researcher's interpretations of participants' accounts). This assumption fits well with my epistemological stance (i.e. the nature of relationship between the knower/would-be knower and what can be known) which I have described above. Third, IPA wishes to study *meanings* (meanings people ascribe to the things about which they talk) and the origins of these meanings in the social/cultural context. In this regard, IPA is relevant to an exploration of the meanings children who live in poverty attach to their lives and the origins of these meanings in their

cultural/social context. In other words, IPA can be used to reflect both the subjective, unshared aspects of the children's experiences and the shared aspects of their experiences (Shaw, 2001).

Fourth, since IPA emphasises the importance of entering the life world of participants, it employs flexible and open-ended data collection techniques. In order to understand how children perceive and make sense of their world a flexible data collection technique is needed- IPA provides this opportunity. Fifth, IPA is an exploratory tool that is data-driven rather than theory-driven. Therefore, for my research, which is an exploratory research of poor children's experiences and perspectives, IPA is appropriate. Finally, as a new and developing approach IPA gives freedom and space for researchers' creativity (Willig: 2001; 2008) both in terms of data collection and analysis. This, I think, is important advantage for any researcher who wishes to investigate a relatively new area.

#### **4.2.3. Choosing the research site**

After selecting specific qualitative approach, I selected Kolfe, a sprawling and impoverished neighbourhood on the western edge of the Ethiopia capital, Addis Ababa, as my research site (see Figure 5). Despite the fact that the majority of the poor in Ethiopia are living in rural areas, my study focused on Addis Ababa because with increasing population growth and rural-urban migration, urban poverty has been increasing in the country "at an alarming rate" (World Bank Report, 2005). Poverty is especially on the rise in Addis Ababa, the largest urban centre and the capital city of the country (UNCHS, 2000). There is also little systematic work on urban poverty in Ethiopia. Even the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) pays little attention to the country's towns and cities (Kedir, 2005).

I selected Kolfe, despite the fact that there were poorer neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa such as *Teklehaimanot* and *Merkato*, because I am familiar with the area as a result of my involvement in the WeD project as a research officer there. Kolfe was also one of my fieldwork sites when I did my MA thesis on how female Commercial Sex Workers negotiate physical and social spaces (Bethlehem, 2005). That familiarity means that I have already established contact and a relationship of trust with local officials, important individuals such as association leaders (e.g. of burial societies), respected individuals and young people who know the social and physical map of the area, and non-governmental

organizations which operate in the area, enabling me to identify and have access to my informants.

Kolfe is considered as one of the semi-peripheral parts of the city (Feleke et al, 2006). According to the former Administrative Structure of Addis Ababa, the Kolfe area encompasses *Kebele*<sup>8</sup> 9, 10 and 11 from *Woreda*<sup>9</sup> 24 and *Kebele* 3, 4,5,6,7 and 8 from *Woreda* 25. Kolfe is included in the Kolfe-Keranyo Sub-City Administration and is one of the ten sub-cities recently organized by the Addis Ababa Municipality.

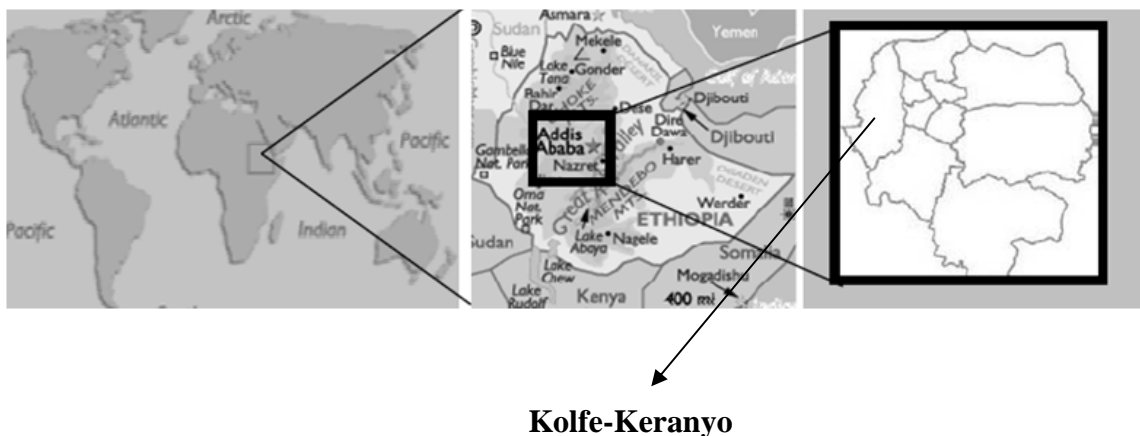


Figure 5: Map locating Kolfe in Addis Ababa city, Ethiopia

Kolfe is home to people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds (see figure 6). The major five ethnic groups who live in the area are Gamu, Gurage, Wolaita, Oromo and Amhara. The main religious groups are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims (Feleke et al, 2006).

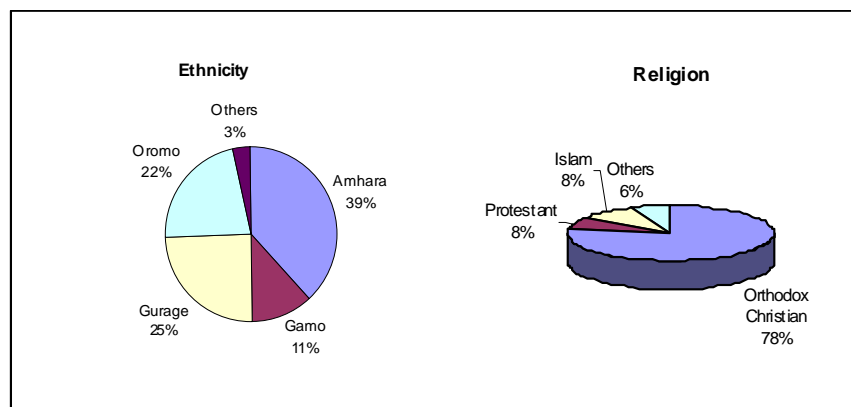


Figure 6: Ethno-religious composition of Kolfe area

Source: WeD Ethiopia Kolfe Urban Profile (2006, p. 9)



Figure 7: A neighbourhood in Kolfe

Orphanhood and single parenthood are common in Kolfe area (Feleke et al, 2006). HIV/AIDS has dramatically increased the number of children who lost one or both of their parents over the last decade. In addition to HIV/AIDS, desertion by husbands is a major reason for single parenthood in the area. Poor husbands often desert their wives because of unemployment, large family size, job-hunting and quarrels (Ibid.). Among poor families who stay together alcohol abuse, violence and absent fathers due to labour migration are also common. For more on geography, social structure and history of Kolfe area see the WeD Ethiopia Kolfe Urban Profile (Feleke et al, 2006).

To help me identify a specific site within the larger Kolfe area I consulted the staff and officials of the Kolfe- Keranyo Sub-city Administration and organizations that work on poor and orphan children in the Kolfe area. The organizations included secular and church-based NGOs such as Tesfa Social and Development Association, Mary Joy Aid through Development, Mekane Yesus, Kale Hiwot and Kideste Mariam. Based on the information I gathered from the sub-city administration and the organizations listed above, as well as from my own knowledge of the area acquired while working as a research officer for the WeD research project in Ethiopia, I selected **Kebele 10/11** as my specific fieldwork site. The *Kebele* has one of the largest numbers of residents and one of the poorest (Feleke et al., 2006).

#### **4.2.4. Selecting and recruiting child informants**

The next step was identifying possible child informants. This involved identifying poor children in the *Kebele* who were willing to participate in the research process and deciding on the age of my child informants.

##### ***Identifying poor children***

To identify poor children who live in the specific research site I approached officials of the Kebele administration, Tesfa Social and Development Association (here after Tesfa) and Mary Joy Aid through Development (here after Mary Joy). These organizations (particularly Tesfa) used three strategies to identify poor children living in the area. First, they collect information about poor children from different *Idirs*<sup>10</sup> that operate in the area. Second, they collect information about poor children from the Kebele administration. Third, they receive a petition from poor families and individuals who are not a member of any *Idir* or who do not have a Kebele identity card. I find this approach very efficient to identify poor children in the area because it not only crosschecks information from three sources (*Idir*, Kebele and individuals), but also uses ‘bottom-up’ approach. By ‘bottom-up’ approach, I mean residents of the area are involved in the identification process, either through their membership of *Idir* or Kebele or by approaching Tesfa individually.

I received a lot of cooperation from Tesfa and Mary Joy. Once I explained to them why I needed their list of poor children they cooperated readily and quickly. The *Kebele* officials were reluctant to give me their list, claiming that in the past they provided similar information to an individual who had used it inappropriately for selfish motives. In any case, I was able to find the *Kebele* list with the help of people who work at Tesfa. My attempt to find a list of poor children from other organizations did not succeed.

The *Kebele* list consists of names of poor and orphan children, names of their parents or caregivers, the age of the child and residence (in the form of house number). However, a number of factors reduced its usefulness. One was that it was rather casually composed and poorly organized (not to speak of the poor calligraphy that makes part of the document unreadable). The other, and more serious problem, was the fact that the residential addresses listed were inadequate and unhelpful. This is because the *Kebele* was formed by merging four previous *Kebeles* (i.e. *Kebeles* 04, 06, 07 and 08) and one can find the same

house number in each of the four former *Kebeles*. Since the list does not include the former *Kebeles* of the children, it made the task of locating the children a rather laborious process.

The list from Mary Joy had the same problem, even though it contained valuable information like the gender, the educational levels and the schools of the children. Unlike the list from the two institutions, the list from Tesfa was up-to-date regarding the residential address of the children: it lists their house numbers based on the former *Kebele* numbering. It was thus very easy to track down the children who are mentioned in this list. Besides, the Tesfa list also indicates the sources of information based on which it was composed. What I did, therefore, was to compare these lists and see if the deficiencies in one could be overcome by information from the other. I also sought oral information from *Kebele* officials and other people such as *Iddir* leaders to sort out the confusion with residential addresses.

By putting together information I obtained from the three sources (Tesfa, Mary Joy and the Kebele Administration) I was able to compose a list of poor children. My list of poor children was made up of two groups of children: first, children who lived with one or both of their parents and who were defined as “*betam chegertegna*” (very needy) by the organizations because their parents’ living condition is “hand to mouth”. Hand to mouth denotes living with the help of essentials and meagre resources. It means that as soon as the resources are coming in, they are being spent on necessities. Second, my list included children who lost both of their parents because of HIV/AIDS and who were living with caregivers who were materially deprived. According to the Kolfe Keranio Health Centre, a large number of ‘single’ and ‘double’ orphans live in Kolfe area and their number has been increasing in the last decade due to mainly HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the major criterion I used to select my informants was material deprivation, mainly deprivation of basic needs such as food and clothing. I have included materially deprived children from different types of households: children who lived with both of their parents, children who lost both of their parents because of HIV/AIDS (‘double’ orphans) and children who lived with a single parent (as shown in Table 4).

Apart from the lists I obtained from the three institutions, I made my own search for children. I did so with the help of my research assistant (Genet) and other individuals with whom I was acquainted while working as a research officer in that area. Because these individuals were born and brought up in the area, they were very familiar with the social

terrain of the neighbourhood. It was not difficult for them to provide names of materially disadvantaged children.

### ***Deciding on the age of informants***

To decide on the age of children to be included in my research, it was necessary to understand the social and cultural construction of children and childhood in the area, a point emphasised by Feeny and Boyden (2003), and Woodhead (1999a). Thus, drawing on the WeD Ethiopia Young Lives 1 protocol, I prepared an interview schedule, which included questions such as what is/are the criterion/criteria to consider someone as a child and how do you categorize children. I posed those questions to three parents (rich, middle and poor), five community leaders (such as *Iddir* leaders and respected elderly) and four educators (primary and secondary school teachers) which I selected based on their knowledge of the area and willingness to participate (for a full list of checklist of questions, see appendix, 1). Based on the information I got from this exercise and from the Ethiopian literature on children, I decided to focus on children between the age of 11 and 14. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which classifies all individuals under 18 as ‘children’, has become standard in the Ethiopian schools, parents and community leaders in the research site noted that individuals above 14 should not be considered ‘children’. I decided not to focus on children under 11 because, from what I gathered from the Ethiopian literature, comparatively more work has been done on that category of children while very little is known about those aged 11-14. Moreover, considering the methods of data collection that I have chosen (i.e. semi-structured individual interviews and diary writing), children under 11 would respond less well to methods requiring literacy and articulacy in the company of an adult.

Once I narrowed the target age group of my child informants, I used purposive sampling to select my informants from the list I prepared based on the information I got from the three institutions and from other individuals living in the area. I selected an equal number of boys and girls, 15 boys and 15 girls, totalling 30 children. Then, I started the task of locating them with the help of my assistant (Genet). With her help, and two weeks of walking and inquiring, we were able to locate all the 30 children on the sample. Then, we began to visit the residences of each child. The purpose of the visits was to get a visual impression of the living conditions of these children. Interestingly enough, at first I got the



impression that only some of the children lived in poor conditions. I got the impression that some of them lived in houses that, as far as external (as well as internal) appearances go, cannot be described as the houses of the very poor. These houses were relatively spacious and well furnished. In fact, due to this impression, I considered eliminating the children who lived in these houses from my sample (I even made remarks against the names of these children: “not selected based on observation”). It was only later, following discussions with a number of people, including experienced staff at Tesfa that I realized that the connection between children’s material disadvantage and shelter is not a direct one. Many people with whom I talked kept saying that I have to find out details about how the children actually lived, not just, where they lived, before deciding whether there are cases of child poverty. I discovered that even in some “big” and nice houses (compared to most residences in the neighbourhood) there are children who are living in very poor conditions.

Three of the girls in the sample told me that they are planning to spend the rainy season visiting their relatives in rural areas and the caregiver of another girl refused to allow the child to participate<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, I was forced to narrow down my sample to the 26 children (11 girls and 15 boys) whom I recruited as my informants (for main profiles of informants, see table 5 below). This comprised 10 children each from the *Kebele* and Tesfa lists<sup>12</sup> and 6 children through assisted search (3 with the help of my assistant and 3 suggested by other individuals).

Table 4: Main profiles of Informants

Characteristic	General description
Age	12 children-12 years old; 9 children-13 years old and the remaining 5 children-11 years old
Gender	11 girls and 15 boys
Religion	The majority of the children interviewed (i.e. 22 children) belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox church. There were 2 Muslims and 2 Protestants.
Educational level	The educational level of children interviewed ranged from 4 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade. 9 children were in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, 6 children were in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, 4 children each were in 4 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> grade and 3 children were in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade.
Place of origin	All 26 children involved in the research were born and brought up in Addis Ababa
Income	The majority of parents/caregivers earned less than 150 birr <sup>13</sup> (£9.7) per month. However, the financial and economic condition of interviewed children was not equal. In other words, there was a hierarchy of poverty among the 26 children interviewed. Most of the children’s parents were working as daily labourers

Characteristic	General description
	(such as carrying stones for construction work, washing other people's clothes, arranging stones as stalls for those who sell used clothes on the street, selling food items) so did not have a reliable source of income.
Types of household and children residence status	9 children came from 'two-parent' families, 9 children came from 'without- parent' families: 6 lived with a caregiver who is a relative, 2 lived with a caregiver who is their former neighbour and 1 lived in child-headed household. 8 children came from 'single- parent' families: 7 lived in male-absent single parent families and 1 child lived in female- absent single parent family.
Household size	18 of the children interviewed lived in a large household, i.e. with more than 5 members.

Despite the fact that the children spent a considerable amount of time at school, I wanted to conduct my study in their home/neighbourhood setting for a combination of reasons. First, I did not want the children and others at their school to get the impression that the children were selected for the study only because they are poor. I thought if I did the research in a school context the children would be stigmatized for being poor. Doing the research in a neighbourhood context had the advantage of respecting the children's privacy. I did not tell the children that I am particularly interested in the life of poor children. This was because part of the purpose of the study is to know how children who live in poverty perceive their situation. Second, I wanted to observe how the children interact with, what most of them identified as, the most significant people in their lives: their parents/caregivers, siblings, neighbourhood friends/peers and neighbours. Third, most of the qualitative studies in the Ethiopian context have been done in a school context (e.g. Poluha, 2004).

#### **4.2.5. Obtaining consent including right to withdraw**

The first step in recruiting child informants of any child researcher who considers children as autonomous persons, capable of making choices and taking actions is obtaining their informed consent i.e. making sure that the children know what it means to participate in the study (see Alderson, 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Upon making home visits to the children whom I sought to recruit for the study, I made a point of explaining the purpose<sup>14</sup> of my research both to the parents/caregivers of the children and to the children themselves. I used very plain language to describe not only what I wanted to do but also how I planned to do it. But the first thing I realized while talking to parents/caregivers about the purpose of my visit is that there is very little awareness of academic research in the place I chose for

my work. At first, very few parents/caregivers understood when I said that I am going to do research about children. What they were accustomed to was people registering children for charities or for vaccination. Therefore, to my surprise, a number of people in the neighbourhood who heard about me came to beg me to put their children's name on my list thinking that they might get money or free health care for their children. Hence, I found communicating the purpose of my research to parents/caregivers more difficult than I had initially imagined.

After I made sure that the parents/caregivers of the children understood the purpose of my research clearly, I first asked them for permission to involve their children in my research, and then asked the children if they would be interested and willing to participate in the research. I told the children that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the research at any time and explained the consequences of their participation (including any discomforts and inconveniences they may experience during the research) and the things I expected them to do if they agreed to participate. Usually, parents/caregivers found my requests for the child's assent rather unnecessary: "I already said okay", they would say, "what is the purpose of asking the child for approval"? Whenever this happened, I tried to explain why it was necessary to ask the assent of the child, and in almost all cases, they understood. Of course, some parents/caregivers knew the importance of asking the assent of the children from the start. In the final analysis, almost all parents/caregivers were willing to cooperate except one caregiver who refused to allow the child to participate, despite the child's willingness. The child was therefore excluded from the research.

In the course of the research, I also learnt that asking parents/caregivers to sign a consent form is impractical in the Ethiopian context. The two parents I asked to sign a consent form were very uncomfortable about doing so. Moreover, people in Tesfa and Mary Joy whom I shared my experience with the two parents told me that there is a tendency among residents to associate 'filling in a form' with government. They said the two parents might be suspicious because they might think that I am a government person who came to collect information about whether they paid their *Kebele* house rent or anything to do with the government. Therefore, I quickly abandoned the idea of asking the rest of parents/caregivers to sign a consent form and simply asked them for their permission.

#### 4.2.6. Selecting the time frame

Because I wanted to conduct my fieldwork in the children's home/neighbourhood setting rather than at their school (for reasons I explained in section 4.2.5), I had to plan my fieldwork in accordance with the periods when the children do not go to school. Children in Ethiopia, to the most part, are on vacation or break during the rainy season, which extends from June to September. Hence, I conducted my fieldwork between June and September dividing it into two parts: 1<sup>st</sup> phase between June and September 2006 and 2<sup>nd</sup> phase between June and September 2007. Dividing the data collection process into two parts was useful not only to fill gaps from the first phase but also to follow interesting changes and continuities in the children's lives (see also Holland et al., 2006). I spent a total of nine months in the field, including a month when I established contact with relevant government and non-governmental institutions in the research area, as indicated in the timeline below.

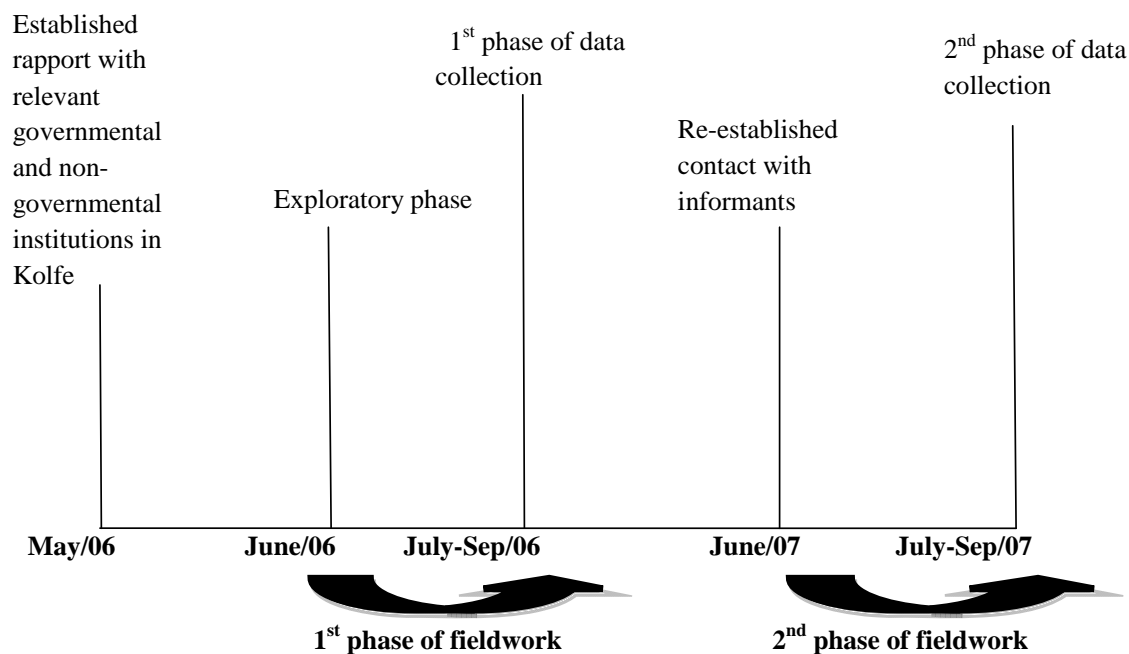


Figure 8: Timeline for fieldwork

The exploratory phase involved identifying a specific site within the larger Kolfe area, selecting informants, building rapport and gaining their trust.

### **4.3. The Fieldwork Process**

#### **4.3.1. Building rapport and gaining trust**

During the first two weeks of my contact with my child informants, I was engaged in informal conversations with them and their parents/caregivers. I took notes at this stage, but only occasionally and in a rather informal way. My focus was on establishing rapport with them and their parents/caregivers. I believe that this period was very helpful in gaining the trust of parents/caregivers and making them comfortable about my research and me. Although, as stated above, I explained the purpose my research to parents/caregivers at the very beginning, I realized that parents/caregivers developed trust in me and my research after listening to the issues I raised in the discussions with their children. This exploratory phase was also important in making the children close to me. Moreover, I realized in the process of building rapport that the presence or absence of parents/caregivers made a difference in the way the children talked or answered questions. It was therefore a useful exercise for designing my questions and envisioning the various circumstances under which they might be posed to the children.

#### **4.3.2. Negotiating privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

##### *Privacy*

Once I felt that parents/caregivers had developed trust in me I started to interview the children alone. In fact, many of the parents/caregivers were comfortable enough with me to acknowledge the fact that the children would talk to me more freely if I talked to them alone. The children were also willing and happy to talk to me alone. As anticipated, the children talked more freely in the absence of other family members. The only problem was, of course, it was not always possible to find the children alone at their houses. Almost all of them lived in crowded single room houses where there is always somebody else in addition to the child and it was not always easy to ask parents/caregivers to leave. In many cases, what I would do is excuse myself on account of the family members having something to do in the house and take the child informant outdoors to talk on the veranda or some corner of the house. After some time, I was able to involve the children themselves in the planning of the interview circumstances; this made it possible for the children to let me know the times when there would be least possibility of disturbance or interference from other family members.

### *Anonymity*

A number of social researchers (e.g. Morse, 1998) have emphasised the importance of respecting the anonymity of research participants to protect their identities. Many of these scholars (e.g. Singleton and Strait, 1999) have also recognized the difficulty of achieving complete anonymity in social research. In this thesis, I attempted to respect my informants' anonymity by replacing their real names with pseudonyms. However, I acknowledge that anyone familiar with the research site may still be able to identify them given other biographical details (such as age, gender and family background) available about them. These details could not be removed from the thesis because they were essential for analysis, particularly to understand the empirical data fully and in context. I did not anonymise my fieldwork site for two practical reasons. Firstly, I thought the anonymisation of the fieldwork site could undermine the usefulness of the research to national, particularly to local policy and practice. Secondly, even if I replaced the real name of the site with a pseudonym, I thought, it would remain identifiable locally and nationally as the area has distinctive features (for example, Kolfe was famous for its big open market notably for the wholesale of second-hand clothes) that set it off from other neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa.

### *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is closely related to privacy and anonymity. It is concerned with 'who will have access to the data and how the data will be used' (Wiles et al, 2006: 287). Prior to interviews, I asked all the children whether I could tape record their conversations. I also explained to them that their stories and other information they provided me will not appear in the final thesis or any other publication in ways that threaten their privacy and confidentiality, and all these have been respected.

### **4.3.3. Addressing power imbalance**

The power imbalances that exist between adult researchers and child participants, and the need to redress this have been discussed at length in the methodological literature on research with children (e.g. Morrow and Richards, 1996; Christensen and James, 2000). Those who see children as essentially different from adults argued that researchers have to

recognize this power differential not only because it is ethically correct but also because it can compromise the validity and reliability of the research data. The latter is particularly true because children feel forced to say what researchers want to hear. In my study, I have tried to minimize the power differential between the children and me as a researcher by giving the children some control over the interview process. The children were able to decide not only where and when to be interviewed but also the content of interviews. With semi-structured interviews, I was able to involve the children in the decision of what to include in the interviews and in what detail. I also believe that the good rapport I was able to establish with the children and their families, and the fact that my fieldwork was done over a prolonged period helped me to diminish power imbalances by giving the children and me the opportunity to know one another.

#### **4.3.4. The use of incentives with the children**

There are no specific guidelines about appropriate types, amount or schedules regarding the use of incentives in research with children. In fact, in qualitative research (particularly in Anthropology) there is a strong feeling that incentives should not be offered to any participants. Nevertheless, as Head (2008) argues, although little attention has been given to their role and impact, the use of incentives with participants has become commonplace in qualitative research. As a result, decisions about whether to offer an incentive and what are reasonable types and amount of incentive to offer children or parents in qualitative research are left to individual researchers.

In quantitative research, there are three models regarding the use of incentives with informants: wage payment, market and reimbursement. These models vary based on philosophical beliefs about the role and responsibility of informants in a study. In the market model, incentives are given because certain types of informants are essential for that study and they are not easily accessible. This works according to a supply and demand premise. That is, if informants needed for research are not easily accessible, a higher level of incentive will be necessary than if they are readily accessible. In the wage payment model, informants are seen as ‘working’ in a study, which will necessitate reimbursement for their time, effort, and burden at minimum wage rates. In the reimbursement model, only the direct ‘costs’ of participation to informants is reimbursed, with little recognition of any cost (like time and burden) other than monetary.

I gave each child 5 birr (approximately £0.33) per interview mainly taking into account that the majority of the children worked during school vacation and had they not decided to participate in my study they could have earned this amount of money by working during the times they were with me. I told this to the children and their parents/caregivers from the start. From time to time, I checked where the money went. Often the children put away the money inside their “piggy bank” savers in my presence. In almost all cases, I was told that the money is being saved to cover school expenses or to buy clothing or shoes for school.

#### **4.3.5. Methods of data collection**

In order to explore the perspectives of poor children in Addis Ababa about their situation and daily experiences (particularly about risks and ‘positive influences’ for their wellbeing, and their coping strategies and the efficacy of these) I used individual semi-structured interviews, and subsequently diaries as major methods of data collection. I also employed other “task-based” methods (such as draw-and-tell and timeline) during the last two weeks of my second period of fieldwork. In this section, I discuss why I used these methods, how I employ each of them, and reflect on the methodological and ethical dilemmas and tensions encountered in using them.

#### **Individual semi-structured interviews**

##### ***Theoretical premises for employing individual semi-structured interviews***

I selected individual semi-structured interviews as my major data collection method because they have the potential to answer my research questions, which concern children’s perspectives and daily experiences of their life. In recent years, with the growing tendency to see children as ‘experts’ on their own lives the use of qualitative individual interviews with children has increased dramatically (Irwin and Johnson, 2005). The main reason for this is that qualitative individual interviews are particularly suitable to gain information about children’s perspectives and subjective experiences of their life (Yarrow, 1960; Punch, 2002). Semi-structured individual interviews particularly allow children to tell their stories in their own words on issues which are of interest to the researcher. Unlike structured interviews, they are open-ended to allow children to express their perceptions and flexible enough to incorporate new areas or issues which might be identified by the children themselves. Unlike unstructured interviews, they have the advantage of giving focus as they



start with a checklist of points that the researcher wants to address (see Smith, 1995, for a similar perspective).

Nevertheless, the ways in which interviews were used with children are not uniform. That is, some child researchers used interviews in isolation (e.g. Ridge 2002) and others mixed them with other techniques i.e. “task-based” methods such as diaries and drawings (e.g. Punch, 2002) for reasons I will describe shortly.

### *Application*

The children’s interviews were semi-structured and started with factual questions about the children’s biographies. Children were then asked to tell brief stories about their lives. Finally, children were asked topic-specific questions that are directly and indirectly related to the 3 research questions that guided the conduct of the study (see appendix 2, for a full list of questions). I spent 30–40 min per day with each child and on average I met each of them once or twice a week.

During my first two contacts with each child, I also asked parents/caregivers very general questions about their household. In addition to getting basic information, the interviews were meant to create a relationship of trust with the children’s parents/caregivers. In order to get a picture of the children’s household profiles and the social and economic background of their parents or families, I also asked both parents/caregivers and children to describe the source/s of income of the household.

Until I felt that the children had developed a close relationship with me, which was mainly expressed in terms of being able to have a long conversation with me without feeling shy (a phase that lasted almost for the first forty-five days of my contact with them), I did not use a tape recorder. I would simply jot down notes on the spot. During the first few days of my contact with the children, I noticed that their answers were very brief but later they started telling me about various aspects of their lives in the form of stories. I think the tape recorder was useful not only in terms of saving interview time (because I did not need to take notes) but also in shifting the interviews from the question and answer mode to a discussion mode (because it allowed both the children and I to have a “normal talk” without being interrupted by the note taking process).

### ***Methodological and ethical dilemmas and tensions***

Interviewing the children was not however without difficulties. First, it was difficult to keep their attention for more than 40 min. That is, after 30–40 min of conversation the children got bored. As a result, it took me a long period to accumulate a rich data set. Second, it was not easy to discuss threats with the children without hurting their feelings or causing them emotional distress. Normally one way of dealing with this problem is to avoid those questions, which may cause them emotional distress. However, this is not an easy task. To start with, it is difficult to tell which questions will hurt their feelings and which not. Moreover, even if the researcher managed to identify these questions, they may be unavoidable questions (i.e. questions that may be stressful for the children to discuss but very important for the research). In my case, whenever I came to questions or conversations, which I suspect are ‘difficult’, but unavoidable I forewarned children that the question might upset or irritate them and told them that they have the right to refuse to answer or discontinue the conversation if they felt uncomfortable. In some occasions, I also arranged meetings with children and parents/caregivers (whenever appropriate) to discuss the research process. This I believe has created opportunities for both the researcher and participants to share their experiences of the study.

### **“Task-based” Research Methods**

#### ***Theoretical premises for using “task-based” research methods***

Child researchers have used “task based” methods such as diaries, drawings, and timelines along with individual interviews for a number of reasons. Punch (2002) used drawings along with informal interviews and other “task-based” methods to “warm-up to more difficult activities” and establish a close relationship with the children. Curray and Russ (1985) used photographs as prompts in the middle of an interview (cited in Kortessluoma et al, 2003). Faux et al (1998 cited in Ibid) encouraged children to draw pictures at the beginning of an interview to “alleviate the anxiety” experienced by informants. Backett and Alexander (1991) used drawings as an icebreaker to start a semi-structured qualitative interview.

In my study, I used “tasked based” methods for two reasons: to enrich my data from individual interviews and to assess their usefulness in the urban Ethiopian context. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, some of these methods particularly diaries were

also useful in terms of motivating the children and establishing strong rapport with them and their families.

### ***Applications, methodological and ethical dilemmas and tensions***

#### **Diaries**

I asked the children to write a daily diary on how they spend their time during the day including their activities/events, interactions and feelings (see figure 9 below). Unlike most studies which used retrospective diaries (e.g. Punch, 2002) (i.e. asking children to write about what happened the day before), I asked the children to write their diaries on the same day before they go to bed. During the first phase of fieldwork, 24 children wrote a diary on a daily basis for about three and a half months. During the second phase of fieldwork, 22 of these children did the same for about three months. In the first month of the first phase of fieldwork, children's diaries focused on the *activities* which they accomplished during the day but later they were asked to write about their *perceptions and feelings*, for instance whether they were happy during the day or not and what was the reason. Each month children were given a pen and an exercise book for the diary writing purpose. Every week, I collected their diaries after having discussed what they had recorded over the course of the week.

The children's diaries produced very rich data on the children's daily routines, their contributions to their household and their subjective evaluation of their situation. Issues that did not come out in the individual interviews (maybe because I did not include them in my checklist, the children forgot to tell me about them, or they happened after I left) appeared in the children's diaries. At the initial stage of my research, I used these data to develop a checklist of questions for individual interviews with the children and to some extent with parents/caregivers.

Apart from producing very rich data about the children's lives, diary writing was also a good source of motivation for most of the children. Most of them had no one who monitors their education, in terms of, for example, asking them what they wrote today or whether they have done their homework or not. As a result, I think most of them found it motivating when I looked at what they had written and asked them to explain it. It also helped me to establish good rapport with parents/caregivers and with the children themselves. Most parents/caregivers liked my asking their children to write a daily diary. Some of these

parents/caregivers considered that as a good way of developing the writing skill of their children and some just confused it with me helping the children with their school work. Some of the children and their siblings told me that their parents always made sure that they wrote their diary before they went to bed. Obviously, this might have created some pressure on some of the children. After the children started to write their diaries, I also saw improvement in terms of some of their writing skills. That is, both in terms of their handwriting and their ability to express themselves. However, diary writing was not applicable to all the children; some children (particularly the girls) do not know how to write well and it was difficult to read different handwriting.

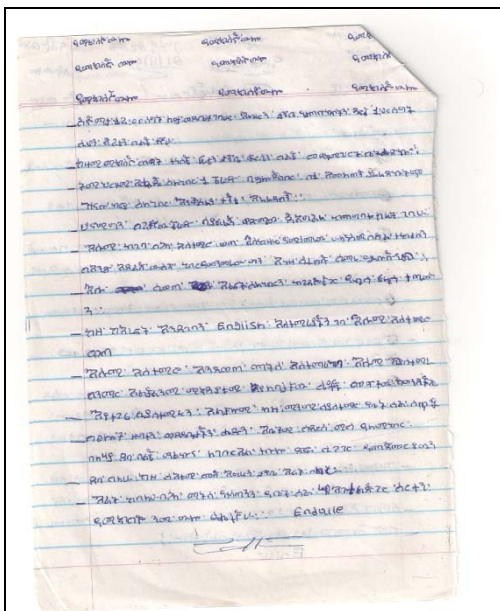


Figure 9: A daily diary of a 12-year-old boy

## Drawings

I employed this technique during the last two weeks of my second period of fieldwork. Eighteen children (12 boys and 6 girls) were asked to draw pictures based on four themes which are directly and indirectly related to my research questions. Specifically, they were asked to draw pictures on two themes that are related to research question 1 on risks for their wellbeing:

- “Things/people/places which I dislike and fear in my neighbourhood”
- “Things/people/places which I dislike and fear at my school”)

Two themes that are related to research question 3 on factors that positively influence their wellbeing ('positive influences'):

- "Things/people/places which I like in my neighbourhood"
- "Things/people/places I like at my school").

For each of their pictures the children were asked to write its meaning (i.e. what their picture represents) as a brief caption. At the end of each session, I also had informal chat with each of the children about their drawings.

In order to give the children ample time to think about what they want to draw, at first my plan was to give them blank paper and pencils and let them draw their pictures whenever they have time and collect them during our next meeting. However, I abandoned this idea quickly after I tried it with three children. I found out that one of these children (a girl) copied most of her pictures from her textbook. The others asked their older siblings to help them with their drawings. Therefore, all the children's pictures were subsequently done in my presence even if that meant I had to patiently sit for a long period at each of the children's houses.

However, I found this method to be the most challenging and problematic of all the methods I used in my research for a number of reasons. First, the children needed a long period (longer than the time needed for individual interviews) to make their drawings. This is a challenge particularly because I had to be with them when they do their drawings for the reasons I described above. Second, things/people/places which are difficult to draw were skipped by the children and on the other hand those which are easy to portray were drawn by some of them despite the fact that they are less important to their lives (e.g. one girl draws a cottage and a boy draws a hen). The former point emerged in the informal discussion I had after the drawing exercise with the children based on my question "were there issues which you would like to draw but found it difficult to do so". Third, some children focused on the quality of their drawings (to impress the researcher) and drew little about their real experiences. As a result, I had to reassure them repeatedly that I am not interested in the quality of their drawings but want to know about their own views and experiences.

Fourth, it was not an appropriate method for all the children, particularly as most of the girls could not draw much. That is, I think, because of a combination of factors. Firstly, most of the government schools which the children are going to do not teach them drawing

skills. Secondly, compared to the boys, the girls have little chance of exposure to "visual images associated with the mass media" (Punch, 2002: 331) such as television. For a combination of reasons (such as for security and because they are expected to help their families with domestic work) the girls are not allowed to go far from their houses and unlike the boys they do not freely watch television at neighbours' houses or go to '*video houses*'. Thirdly, all the children are part of a 'verbal culture'. That is, very generally speaking, Ethiopians tends to express themselves verbally rather than through other means of communication. Finally, the fact that most of the girls do not have drawing skills made the whole drawing exercise quite taxing for them rather than being a source of fun. Again the girls tended to draw pictures which they saw from textbooks (e.g. three out of the six girls drew "the flag at school").

### **Timelines**

Seventeen children (12 boys and 5 girls) were asked to tell me about important times in their lives. Specifically, there were asked about themes, which are related directly and indirectly to research question 1 on risks for their wellbeing:

- 'The time I was sad/unhappy'
- 'The time I was angry'
- 'The time I was worried most'
- 'The time I was frightened most'

And research question 3 on 'Positive influences' for their wellbeing:

- 'The time I was happy'
- Their future aspirations:
- 'My future hopes/plans'.

Based on their responses I made timelines for each of the children on the spot, often the children helping me with drawing lines (See, for instance, figure 10 below).

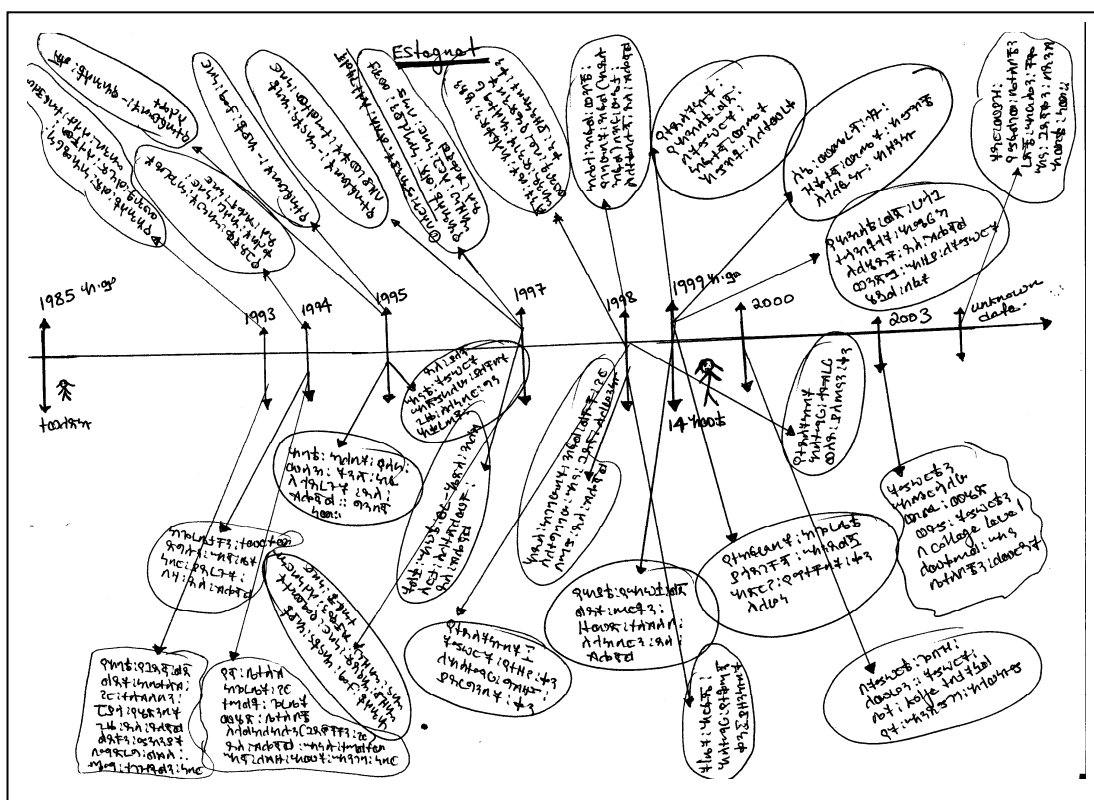


Figure 10: The timeline of a 14 years old girl

Some children could remember many happenings in their lives and others could only recall some of them. As a result, some children have a very detailed timeline and others a sketchy one. Timeline was not appropriate for some of the children, as they could not relate happenings with specific years.

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

##### 4.4.1. Analysis of data from individual interviews

My analysis of data from individual interviews took a two-stage approach. After finishing my first phase of fieldwork that took about 4 months, I undertook a preliminary analysis and following my second phase of fieldwork, I conducted an in-depth interpretative phenomenological analysis.

##### *Preliminary analysis*

At this stage of analysis, apart from identifying major themes in the children's interviews, I was able to identify my main informants. This included the children with whom I was able to establish strong rapport and who possibly for that reason were able to provide me with

rich data, and those whose life histories, I thought were interesting to follow up in the next phase of fieldwork. I also transcribed verbatim part of the interviews which are connected directly and indirectly with the themes I identified above, and subsequently translated them into English (all interviews had been conducted in Amharic). At the end of this analysis process, I refined my research questions for the second phase of fieldwork.

### *Translation*

I transcribed and translated the children's tape-recorded interviews by myself. Despite being time and energy consuming, this was a useful exercise in a number of ways. First, because I could understand the interviews in context and Amharic is my mother tongue I was able to draw on additional implicit information such as tone of voice (e.g. if it involves irony) and pausing. I think, as Birbili (2000) argues, translation depends not only on the linguistic competence of the researcher or translator but also on the ability to understand the context or culture within which the language is used. Second, this exercise kept me close to the children's narratives and in a way facilitated my analysis. Third, it enabled me to locate strong quotes and themes in the interview transcripts easily.

Nevertheless, translating from Amharic into English was difficult because in addition to my own limitations as a translator, I think Amharic does not translate directly into English. Phillips (1960: 291 quoted in Temple and Young, 2004: 165) argues that this is "in absolute terms an unsolvable problem" because almost any word, phrase and sentence in any language carry with them a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that cannot be directly translated into another language. With regard to quotations, there was also the issue of whether to translate word-by-word or to give attention to the readability of quotations. As much as possible I tried to balance the two and whenever I came across with words or phrases that do not translate directly into English I tried to obtain their "conceptual equivalence" (Temple, 1997: 610) i.e. comparable meanings.

### *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

Following the second phase of fieldwork, which took place in the same site with same children, I conducted an in-depth thematic interpretative phenomenological analysis of all my data from individual interviews with the children. The steps suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003) and Willig (2001) guided this process. I started the analysis by transcribing



verbatim all of the children's audio-taped interviews. Interviews with the six children whom I identified as major informants in the preliminary analysis were also translated into English. Then, I thoroughly read each of the children's transcripts and produced 'initial notes' of my thoughts and observations. I prepared a table with three columns (the middle column for the transcription) and jotted down my 'initial notes' which I called "thinking" in the left-hand column. I followed an "idiographic approach" in the sense that I started with the transcript of one child and gradually moved to the other children's transcripts. I jotted down everything that came to my mind while reading the interview transcript including my understanding of what the child was trying to say (preliminary interpretation) and a summary or paraphrase of what s/he said. Then, I developed my 'initial notes' into 'themes' which I wrote down in the right-hand column of the table. These 'themes' captured the essential meaning of what I jotted down as my 'initial notes' and at the same time represented what the child actually said.

The next step involved listing these 'themes' on a separate paper (in the order they appeared in the text) and trying to make sense of how they are related to one another. I listed the 'themes' that are related to each of my research questions separately using different colours. Themes that are related to research question 1 (i.e. risks) were the children's responses to questions such as "what makes you worry?" "What makes you unhappy" and "Tell me about your significant problems". Themes that are related to research question 3 (i.e. positive influences) were the children's responses to questions such as "what makes you happy" and "Tell me about your happy memories". Themes that are related to research question 2 (coping strategies) were the children's responses to my questions regarding how they cope with or respond to what they perceived as risks such as things which worry them and make them unhappy.

Then, I put together those 'themes' that connect with one another and formed superordinate themes. In order to make sure that the connections I made between the themes is reflected in what my informants said I cross checked my superordinate themes with the original verbatim transcript. I followed the same procedure for the rest of the children and produced a table of master themes for each transcript. The master themes of each transcript then were compared to master themes of other transcripts. This process produced the final superordinate themes of the study, which I organized according to my research questions. For example, four superordinate themes emerged in relation to what the

children considered as risks to their wellbeing: ‘negative relationships’, ‘inability to fulfil material needs’, ‘lack of physical security’ and ‘ill health and disability’. Themes that were not well supported by the data were dropped.

#### **4.4.2. Analysis of data from “task-based” activities**

I read the children’s diaries a number of times (usually at the end of each of my fieldwork weeks). For the children I identified as major informants I prepared a table where I jotted down major events, activities and relationships that were happening in their lives based on what they wrote for me on their diaries. I extracted strong example quotes from their diaries, translated them into English and used them to supplement similar data from individual interviews, mostly in the case studies chapter.

I analysed the children’s drawings based on the meaning (a brief caption) the children wrote for me on each of their drawings and the discussion I had with them at the end of each drawing session regarding the contents of their drawings and whether there were issues they wanted to draw but they found it difficult to do so. I used the children’s drawings on “things/people/places which I dislike and fear in my neighbourhood and at my school” to complement similar data gained from individual interviews in terms of issues, which they consider as risks for their wellbeing (chapter 5). Likewise, their drawings on “things/people/places I like in my neighbourhood and at my school” were used to supplement similar data gained from individual interviews on issues which are vital for their wellbeing (chapter 7). Timelines were also analysed and used in a similar manner.

#### **4.4.3. Case studies**

Three of my empirical chapters were written in the tradition of IPA studies. That is, in each of these chapters I presented the superordinate themes I identified during the analysis together with illustrative quotations from the children’s interviews. The chapters were also structured around these superordinate themes. At the end of each of these chapters, I have a discussion section where I linked the themes identified in the analysis with the relevant literature.

The final empirical chapter was written in the tradition of case study research. This is because unlike the other three empirical chapters that focus on making sense of the experiences of children in poverty as a whole, here my objective was to understand the

situation of individual children in its particularity as well as within its context. And “case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question” (Bryman, 2001: 47). Specifically, I adopted a ‘multiple-case study approach’, which “entails the investigation of more than one case” (p. 53). I compared the situation of five children: three children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts and two children who used, in response to similar risks, coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts. In the case studies chapter, I made use of the data from all the methods I used in the research.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described in detail how I went about doing the research for the thesis by dividing my discussion into three major sections: “The research design”, “The fieldwork process” and “Data analysis”. In the first section, “The research design”, following the suggestions of Guba and Lincoln (1994), I clearly presented my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions before going to the discussion of the methods I used in the research. Then, I showed that my assumptions went well with the approaches of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Finally, before going to the next major section, I discussed how I obtained consent including right to withdraw from the children and their parents/caregivers, how I selected my fieldwork site, child informants and time frame for the study.

In the second section, “The fieldwork process”, I started by presenting the ethical approach to the study. This included a discussion of ‘building rapport and gaining trust’, ‘negotiating privacy, anonymity and confidentiality’, ‘addressing power imbalance’ and ‘the use of incentives with the children’. Then, I discussed each of the data collection methods I used with the children and reflected on what has and has not worked.

In the third section, “Data analysis”, I gave a detailed account of my data analysis process. Specifically, I discussed how I analyzed data from the children’s individual interviews and “task-based” research methods. I took a two-stage approach to analyze data from the children’s individual interviews: preliminary analysis following first phase of fieldwork and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis after conducting second phase of fieldwork. In addition, data from “task-based” methods were used to complement same data from individual interviews. Finally, I explained how I went about writing my four empirical

chapters. The next three chapters have been written within a typical IPA study format while chapter 8 follows a case study research approach.

## **Chapter 5: More than Material Disadvantage: Reconceptualising Risks and their Consequences for Poor Children’s Sense of Wellbeing**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter addresses research question 1: “what do children who live in poverty in an urban Ethiopian setting see as risks to their wellbeing and how does this compare with the risks that have been identified in the theoretical and empirical literature on children in poverty?” Specifically, I will do two things in this chapter in order to understand risks and their effects on poor children’s sense of wellbeing in Addis Ababa. First, I present the children’s perspectives on risks to their wellbeing and then show *how* they viewed these risks as posing a threat to their wellbeing. I base my analysis mainly on data from individual interviews, supplemented with data from “task-based” methods such as drawings. Second, I relate the children’s perspectives on risks and their impacts on wellbeing to what has been identified in the literature on children in poverty.

The chapter has two major sections, namely “Poor children’s perspectives on risks to their wellbeing” and “Discussion”. The first section is divided into two parts. In the first part, I discuss risks based on data from individual interviews with the children. Here, I structured my discussion based on the superordinate and subthemes that emerged after conducting an in-depth thematic Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the children’s interview transcripts. In the second part, I discuss risks based on data from “task-based” methods particularly drawings. In the second section (“Discussion”), I relate the children’s perspectives with what has been identified in the literature on children in poverty. I make one major point in this chapter: there were differences among the children in terms of the things that they considered as a major risk to their wellbeing. The type of family the children belong to was the most important factor of differentiation, followed by gender and age.

### **5.2. Risks as Identified in Individual In-depth Interviews**

In order to explore what children who live in poverty in Addis Ababa perceive as risks to their wellbeing, in my checklist of questions I included questions such as “What does it mean to you when bad things happen?” “Tell me about the main worries you have; current and potential risks and/or problems?”, “What makes you unhappy; angry; sad?”, “Tell me

about your unhappy memories; greatest problems; worries?”, “Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do, and feel)? Why?”(see appendix 2, for a full checklist of questions). After conducting an in-depth thematic Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of interview transcripts, four superordinate themes emerged in relation to what the children considered as risks to their wellbeing. These are:

1. Negative relationships with:
  - 1.1. Family members
  - 1.2. Friends and peers
  - 1.3. Neighbours
2. Inability to fulfil material needs
3. Lack of physical security
4. Ill health and disability

While the children’s accounts strongly suggest that negative relationships posed a major threat to their sense of wellbeing (hence relationships are the major focus of this chapter), the other themes also emerged in the children’s accounts as risks, both directly and through their effect on their relationships. In the rest of this section, I discuss each of these superordinate themes and the subthemes, which emerged under them.

### **5.2.1. Negative relationships**

Negative relationships emerged as central in the children’s accounts of reasons for their unhappiness, sadness, distress and worry mainly with respect to relationships with and between their parents and with friends/peers and neighbours.

#### **Negative family relationships**

##### ***Conflict between parents***

Interviews with the children, particularly with those who lived in two-parent families, revealed that frequent conflict between parents worried many of these children more than other problems they faced personally, such as lack of material resources. Mamitu, a 13-year-old girl, lived in a two-parent family where there was frequent conflict between her parents, and between her older brother and father. She represented her family’s poor relationship particularly that of her parents not only as a reason for her unhappiness but also as more worrying than poverty:

*Beth: Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do and feel)?*

*Mamitu: I am [generally] happy. However, there are also times that I am not happy. I would be happier if all members of my family respected each other. It makes me unhappy that they fight and argue with each other. When this happens, you become worried, right. I become unhappy for this reason. I hate to see them quarrelling. I get very distressed when there is a fight at home [...] If members of my family respected each other, we would have been living happily. I can be happy despite our poverty if there is always peace at home.*

Mulatu, a 13-year-old boy, lived in a two-parent family with a monthly household income of 120 birr. He noted:

*Beth: Tell me about the main worries that you have currently*

*Mulatu: I do not worry often except when my parents fight. When my parents fight, I worry [a lot]. When my parents fight, I quickly get distressed until they make peace.*

Endalk, a boy of the same age, also lived in a two-parent family where there was frequent conflict between his alcoholic father and mother. In response to my question about what it means to him when bad things happen to a child of his age, he described parents fighting in front of their children as a prototypical example of a “bad thing” that can happen to a child of his age:

*Beth: How, please explain that to me?*

*Endalk: The children will be worried. They always listen to fights and arguments and that is not good for their mind and emotion. In addition, if they [parents] separated it will create a problem for the children.*

The idea that links these children’s accounts is that even in the presence of material deprivation and other stressors (for example, Endalk’s alcoholic father), the factor that has the greatest effect on their emotional wellbeing was the quality of their parents’ relationship, specifically whether it is characterized by frequent conflict.

It appears that conflict between parents affected these children’s sense of wellbeing both directly and indirectly. Directly, they represented it as a cause of emotional distress. All of them found it disturbing to see their parents fighting and arguing with each other on a regular basis. All children would probably find this upsetting but in Ethiopian society, witnessing these kinds of openly expressed conflict is likely to be particularly upsetting because Ethiopian society, very generally speaking, discourages the open expression of

emotions such as anger (Ben Ezer, 1999). From an early age children are taught to suppress their feelings - “keep things in your tummy” is a common exhortation from parents. Under normal circumstances, it is unusual to see adults or children expressing their anger loudly and openly. However, the children were distressed mainly because they worried that one of their parents or adult carers (especially women) might get physically hurt. For example, after witnessing numerous violent conflicts between his disabled father and his mother, Endalk said:

*Beth: Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced personally*

*Endalk: ... when my parents fight [...] I fear that one day, when she [my mother] loses all her patience, she will go to his bed and strangle him*

Rahwa used to live with her mother, maternal aunt, stepfather and three younger half-siblings a few weeks before I met her. At the time of the interview, she lived with a caregiver who lived next door to her parents. Rahwa did not know her biological father, although she said she knows that he is alive. Her maternal aunt and stepfather were the authority figures in the family. This was partly because Rahwa’s mother who worked for a hotel as a cook did not spend much of her time at home and, according to Rahwa and her caregiver, partly because she was afraid of her older sister (Rahwa’s aunt). In response to my question about what makes her worry currently, she noted:

*Rahwa: Often my aunt does not get along with my stepfather. I do not remember a day that they did not fight. When they fight, Etete [my caregiver] goes and stops them. When this happens, I get very worried. I worry that he [my stepfather] may hit her [my aunt] in bad places. You know, she is a woman and do not have the strength he has as a man. He can hit her very badly. I hate to see them fight. I get worried.*

Indirectly, conflict between parents might negatively affect the children’s relationship with other people. The children’s accounts suggest that the type of relationship that exists between parents provided a model for the type of relationship children generally have with other people, including their siblings and friends. Children, who have parents that respect each other, Eleni and Mamitu noted, are more likely to have good relationships with other people than those who had parents who frequently fight:



*Beth: What do children of your age need to be happy with their life?*

*Mamitu: ...You know, if your parents love each other, you would tell yourself that you should get along with your brother and love each other. That means if your parents show you love you also show love to your brother and live happily...*

A 13-year-old girl

*Beth: In terms of family, what is difficult for children of your age?*

*Eleni: ...if parents often quarrel with each other their child will be like them. He would say 'they [my parents] are always arguing with each other why shouldn't I be like them'. He then starts to argue and fight. He talks in class and it is difficult for him to listen to what the teachers say...*

A 13-year-old girl

Frequent fights between parents were also viewed as having a negative effect on the children's educational performance. In describing what is difficult regarding family members for children of her age, Eleni said when a child lived in a house where there is a frequent fight between parents "he worries that his parents will argue today" and as a result it is difficult for him to concentrate on his education. In response to my question about what is difficult regarding her family, Esub, a 13 year old girl, suggested another reason for this in that conflict between parents may also force children to spend time in "different kinds of undesirable places" because these children do not want to see their parents fighting with each other. This is particularly the case because most of these children lived in a very small single room houses and unless they leave their house for the street or friends' house, it is impossible for them not to witness fighting between their parents. This might also be related to the fact that these children had little access to recreational facilities such as a park or sport centre, which they can go to when there is a fight at home.

The children's accounts suggest that often reasons for disagreement and violence at home were related to financial/material issues. Endalk whose father became paralyzed through drinking too much alcohol (according to his mother and older sister) described how not only does his father get drunk daily and hit his mother but also how his father does not contribute money to the family:

*Beth: What is the characteristic of a good father?*

*Endalk: ...My father is not like the father of other children. Every day, he gets drunk; he disturbs the house and hits my mother. He does not contribute money, even when he gives money to my mother [which happens very rarely] he gives her only one birr for coffee [for preparing coffee at home]. He wants my mother to give him money. If*

*she said 'I don't have money', he will hit her and disturb the house. Unlike the fathers of other children, he does not come home with bread...*

Despite having lost her mother during the violence that followed the Ethiopian election in 2005, Eleni also finds some consolation in her current living arrangements as:

*Beth: When you compare your present condition with what you have aspired to have is it similar or different?*

*Eleni: ...When my mother was with us there was always a fight in our house. My mother and father argued over buying household goods for the house. My mother wanted him to buy chairs and other goods for the house. She says 'if a guest comes to our house where shall he sit. She also did not want us [the children] to go to our neighbours' house to watch TV. My father says 'I don't have money'. They always fight.*

In addition to being the cause of fights between Eleni's parents, buying household goods was important for Eleni's mother for standing equal with neighbours. Eleni's justification that her mother wanted her father to buy household goods for the house (i.e. her concern that there are no chairs for a guest and her children are going to a neighbour's house to watch TV) suggests that her mother was experiencing shame for not standing equal with neighbours. This is somewhat similar to the shame some of the children expressed in relation to not having a 'proper ball' (pp. 104-105). As will be discussed in the following sections standing equal with friends particularly with those in the neighbourhood was very important for the children.

### ***Conflict with parents***

Interviews with the children who lived in two-parent families regarding their relationship with family members indicate that many of these children did not have close relationships with their fathers. Many of them said that their fathers often come home very late at night (this was true not only for those fathers who worked late, but also for those who did not have jobs) and in some cases do not come home for several days during the week. Many of them also reported that their fathers do not support their families financially. It appears that there was little connection or bond between these children and their fathers, even the very few fathers who supported their families financially. And the children seemed to expect relatively little from their fathers in terms of getting love, care, support, follow up and supervision. Belete lived in a male-absent single-parent family. In response to my question

about his relationship with his father he said he does not have any relationship with him and explained the weak attachment that children in his neighbourhood generally have with their fathers like this: “you know, if we [children in the neighbourhood] tell a lie we swear in [the name of] our fathers”. That is to say we know that we are telling a lie and we do not care if anything happen to our fathers (the assumption here is if one swears falsely in the name of a person something bad will happen to the person).

Mothers, on the other hand, were very important in these children’s lives. All of them (both boys and girls) especially those in male-absent single-parent families reported that they have very close relationships with their mothers (something Poluha (2004) also noted for school children in Addis Ababa). One obvious reason for the children’s strong attachment to their mother is that they spent more time with their mothers than their fathers. As it is the case in other countries, Ethiopian mothers are primarily responsible for taking care of their children. Their mothers mainly socialize children and fathers’ involvement in their lives is minimal. Nevertheless, this could also be because mothers were the major source of income for these children. It was clear from the fieldwork in Kolfe area that most mothers not only look after their husbands and children, they were also the major and often the only source of income for their family. In contrast to the traditional gender role, in Kolfe area often mothers rather than fathers work to earn an income for their family, for example, by selling food items on the street or by selling *tella* and *areki* (local alcoholic drinks). Traditionally, the Ethiopian father is the main breadwinner for his family and the mother is responsible for taking care of her husband and children, and is not expected to work. This partly explained why almost all these children said that their mother is the most important person in their lives.

*Beth: Why do you have such a strong attachment with your mother? I asked you this question because you have mentioned your mother quite a number of times.*

*Habtu: I like my mother since she enables me to stand equal with other children. When I say standing equal, you know what I mean. I do not mean doing big things for me because we are all very poor in this area; what I mean is that my mother always tries hard to provide the things that would make me equal to the other children here [in the neighbourhood] and I am very happy about that.*

A 13-year-old boy

Habtu's explanation for the strong attachment he had with his mother indicates not only why his mother was important to him but also the importance he gave to "standing equal" materially with other children.

The strong emotional attachment the children had with their mothers also came out in the discussion I had with them regarding their hopes and aspirations. Belete who lived with his aunts, an uncle and a niece, for example, said the following concerning his hope:

*My hope is to be able to support my mother. Sometimes I wish I would die before she dies. I say this because of the love I have for her. My major hope is to support her, to see her happy and sit at home [without doing paid work] like the mothers of other children.*

A 13-year-old boy

So, whenever the children felt that their relationship with their mother is getting 'bad' or 'negative' they tended to become emotionally vulnerable. For example, this is how Mulatu described his unhappy memories:

*Beth: Tell me about your unhappy memories*

*Mulatu: Yes, the day I was very unhappy and which I even curse was the day I quarrelled with my mother. It happened recently. I [even] wrote it [in the Diary you asked me to write]. I was very unhappy...*

Many of them also became sad and unhappy whenever they felt that their mother is discriminating against them in favour of their siblings. Endalk said:

*Beth: What makes you sad?*

*Endalk: My mother always favours Dershaye [my older sister]. For instance, when I ask them to give me lunch Dershaye puts a lot of Wet [sauce] on her own plate and gives very little to me and to Haymanot [my younger sister]. I get very angry because my mother does not say anything to Dershaye when she does this. She is afraid of her. Moreover, often while Haymanot [my younger sister] sits around [doing nothing] they send me on errands. Sometimes I say to them 'Is she [Haymanot] a queen? Why do not you send her on errands? Why should it be me always?' Sometimes I refuse to obey...*

Tsbay, a 13 year old girl, similarly felt that her mother 'favours' her younger brother by allowing him to hit her. Esub, a girl of same age, shared her experience in the following passage:

*Beth: Earlier you said that it is difficult when parents do not understand you. Please explain that to me further.*

*Esub: ... All of them [my mother and grandmother] including my father always favour my younger brother. When I tell them that they are not doing good for him they do not listen to me. There are three girls in this house [including me] and he [my brother] is the only boy. They favour him in every respect. Even in terms of food, they give him the best and we [the girls] sometimes are expected to sleep empty stomach. They say he is going to be man and needs to be strong and we are just [going to be] women. This irritates me. I say to myself 'at this time when democracy is widespread, when the radio and television [everyday] talks about democracy it is strange that they think like that'. You know, I can live with this [the discrimination] but it is not good for him. When he grows up if he has a daughter and a son, he will treat them like that. They [my parents] are teaching him a bad lesson.*

Ethiopia is a traditional patriarchal society. Many cultures in Ethiopia favour boys over girls. Hence, Endalk's experience (being discriminated against in favour of his sisters) is an exception rather than the norm. Among the major "gate-keepers" of the male-dominated system in Ethiopia, Poluha (2004) argues, are mothers. Mothers perpetuate the gender system, among other things, by treating boys and girls differently. For example, she noted, mothers strictly control and supervise the girls' behaviour so that they will not deviate from accepted norms. Compared to the girls, they are very reluctant about controlling and supervising the boys' behaviour. One possible explanation for this, she argues, is that mothers, like most Ethiopians, see the distinction between the sexes as something natural. So they may feel confused when they come across blurred boundaries between girls and boys (like when a girl tries to hit a boy). She goes on to argue that although some of the girls in her study found the gender system to be unfair they themselves perpetuated it through their daily interactions with peers and adults. However, Poluha noted there were some exceptions and this was true in my study. As illustrated above, both Tsbay and Esub resented being discriminated in favour of their brothers, although the Ethiopia culture which they were a part expected them to take that as normal (for a discussion of gender in Ethiopia see also Pankhurst, 1992; Emebet, 1998). Nevertheless, as dependents in their family and as young children, Poluha argues, these children could not change anything and if they tried to do so they would risk exclusion by their peers.

Some of these children also expressed their unhappiness at not getting praise for obedience and support in terms of education from their mothers. Belete who lived in a male-absent single-parent family said:

*Beth: What issues/things make you angry?*

*Belete: in this house, I obey and do things but nobody praises me for what I do. [...] Sometimes when I have done a lot of work in the house but I find her [my mother] saying nothing, I say to her 'don't you say Edeg' [literally, 'may you grow': a form of blessing] and when she said 'do you want me to say Edeg for doing such [a minor] work' and then I get irritated*

Habtu similarly describes his life as only “average” for the reasons he provided below.

*Beth: Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do and feel)?*

*Habtu: I am average.*

*Beth: What do you mean by that?*

*Habtu: When I say average, for example [...] I am sad for not getting family support in terms of my education. You know, if I got family follow up I would have been promoted to the next class. If my mother was educated, I could have been a good student. She could have helped me with my education [...] I am also unhappy for not spending time with her. She works most of the time and only come home at night. Even when she comes home at night she goes to bed quickly [as she gets tired after work]. There are even times that we do not see each other. If I went to neighbour's house to watch television, I would not be able to see her at all. For this reason, she does not know whether I am doing ok or not and I do not know whether she is doing ok or not. I would be happy if she could supervise my activities and tell me what is wrong and what is right.*

However, here it should be noted that, unlike the accounts of the children who lived with caregivers as described below, most of these children's accounts of their relationships with their mothers suggest a source of irritation rather than a major risk to wellbeing.

### ***Conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents***

The accounts of many of the children who lived with caregivers (relatives and neighbours) suggest that mistreatment at the hands of caregivers was a major cause of distress for them. They articulated mistreatment in terms of beating, not being allowed to play with friends (generally restricted movement) and being discriminated in favour of other children in the family. Senayte, one of four orphans, lived with her maternal uncles and an aunt. Both her mother and grandmother have died and she did not know her father. Her two little brothers also lived with her while a sister lived with another aunt. In response to my question regarding her personal attributes (particularly about whether she gets depressed<sup>15</sup> or not), she replied:

*I only get depressed when I am beaten. Hayeleab [my caregiver] hits me as he likes. He kicks me or hits me with a stick. In fact, he hit me today, in the morning. He hits me for “not having put the child to bed”. I get very distressed when he hits me. I always worry that he might hit me in the evening when he comes home from work*  
A 12-year-old girl

The interview I had with Senayte also indicates that, apart from the physical violence, her uncle (Hayeleab) who was the parent figure in the household restricted her movement. She told me that she hardly go outside of the house (except when running errands and going to the church) and, therefore, does not interact with any of the children in the neighbourhood. The fact that she hardly goes out of her house and plays with her friends appears to affect her relationship with them negatively. In talking about her relationship with her “best friend”, for example, she said, “when I go outside and play, she [my friend] becomes happy but often I don't go outside. When she asks me to play with her I tell her I can't and then she becomes angry with me”.

Bereket who lived with a distant relative and an older sister after the death of his parents had a similar story:

*Beth: What do you think children of your age need to be happy with their life?*

*Bereket: ...When their family do not make them worry they become happy*

*Beth: What do you mean by that? Please explain to me.*

*Bereket: If they were not beaten without reason, they would be happy.*

*Beth: Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned to me?*

*Bereket: No!*

*Beth: Please explain to me.*

*Bereket: ...I live in constant worry and fear. Bidilu [caregiver] always beats me for reasons that I do not know.*

This was also the case for Hezera who lived with his uncles and an older sister after the death of his parents and maternal grandmother. He described how in the past his uncles (caregivers) would not allow him to go outside the house and how he used to be tired because they send him on errands continuously. Even now, he said:

*They [my uncles] send me on these errands sometimes as late as 11:00 PM and even after. I also ran errands throughout the day. No one says he needs to play [...]. If I say, no they will hit me. They often hit me. They hit me with a stick, kick me with their shoes or slap me [...] they also threaten my sister and me with being chased out of the house*

Aside from the physical and psychological violence that these children experienced, they had very weak relationships with other members of their caregivers' household. Therefore, unlike the children who lived with their biological parents, many of them did not have anybody to turn to when their relationship with the parent figure became bad. Abebe, an 11-year-old boy, lost both of his parents and after their death, he and his four siblings could not survive on their own (the oldest child being 14 years old). As there was no relative to support them, one of their neighbours offered help. They gave shelter to Abebe and his older brother. His other two brothers found a place at two different families and his older sister started to work as a full-time house cleaner. Despite getting a place to sleep and having something to eat, Abebe, however, felt sad:

*Beth: Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do and feel)?*

*Abebe: I am not happy.*

*Beth: Why?*

*Abebe: I do not have my own family [...]. In this house, I do not see myself as part of the family. For instance, children of this house [caretaker's children] can go to the kitchen, eat, and drink whatever they wanted. I used to do that before [when I lived with my parents], but I cannot do that now. I have to wait until I am given*

The fact that he was not able to live with his other siblings was another source of distress for him. In addition to the physical separation, he said,

*Beth: Tell me about the main worries you currently have.*

*Abebe: ... Because the woman [the caregiver of one of my brothers who live at different place] is cruel, I always worry that she might hurt him. She always threatens him with chasing him out of the house...*

After he lost his parents at an early age and he was forced to separate from his siblings, Abebe's concern also extend to the future:

*I also worry that if the man in this house dies I will also be separated from Amare [my only brother who lived with me here]. There are many children in this household and [if the man dies] the woman cannot support all of us by herself.*

### **Negative relationships with friends and peers**

In talking about their relationship with other children, the children made a distinction between "friends" and "children/friends in my neighbourhood". The former referred to



children of the same sex who were close and spent a lot of time with the children, and the latter meant boys and girls, younger children, older children and peers in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, often when the children talked about “children/friends in my neighbourhood” they referred to peers of the same sex. Hence, in this section, I will look at the children’s relationship with their “friends” and “peers” separately.

### ***Conflict with friends***

The children’s accounts suggest that negative features of their friendships, particularly conflict with friends, had adverse effects on their emotional wellbeing. Many of them indicated that they become “sad”, “worried” and “depressed” when they quarrel with their friends. Mulatu, for instance, said:

*Beth: What makes you worry?*

*Mulatu: If I quarrel, if I myself quarrel I become worried [...] If I fight with my friend I want to make peace [with him] quickly, I get distressed [so] I want to meet him [again].*

The children often articulated the negative effect of quarrelling with friends in terms of inability to play with friends. Most of the boys said they get depressed when they quarrel with their friends mainly because those friends would not allow them to enjoy the use of play materials such as balls. For example, Bereket who told me when I met him at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork that his friends refused to speak to him for reasons he did not know described how he now does not feel able to go with them to football field, even though he would like to. To have fun boys and girls also needed the company of their friends. When the children talked about ‘play’ they almost always referred to things they would do with their friends rather than what they would do by themselves and ‘play’ was usually seen as a group activity. In part, this might be because they did not possess materials that would enable them to have fun individually, materials like computers, musical instruments, etc. However, I think, mainly it was because the children viewed playing with friends (being with them) by itself as a source of happiness.

Some of the children perceived “quarrelling with friends” as akin to having no friends and as a result being lonely. Belete, for example, explained why he does not like to quarrel with his friends:

*Beth: What things/issues changed since I saw you last year?*

*Belete: Two of my friends quarrelled with each other [...] I myself do not like to quarrel with my friends. I do not like to be alone. I wish there is no such a thing as loneliness. I am very much scared of being lonely [...] It is said that loneliness does not kill people. However, I disagree. It kills people. It kills people inside....*

In response to my question about whether he has friends who will stand by him during difficult times, Melese, a 13-year-old boy, also described the support he received from his friends “when my leg was hurt because of a car accident” and explained:

*...If a child quarrelled with his friends he would be lonely. Then he would be depressed and sad. If he visits his friends and interacts with them, he will be happy...*

What is interesting about Belete’s and Melese’s remark is that when they talked about the threat posed by loneliness they were referring to the social and psychological state of loneliness (loneliness “kills people inside” and a lonely child would be “depressed and sad”) rather than the possibility that lonely children might be isolated and have no financial and material support.

The children’s accounts also suggest that the quality of their relationship with their friends affected the quality of their relationship with their parents. Mulatu who was described by his mother, neighbours and friends as a “good child” explained:

*Beth: Are there aspects of your behaviour which I did not mention but which you think are important in terms of describing you?*

*Mulatu: ...Sometimes my mother said ‘your character has changed very much’. When I get angry, she said ‘your character has changed’. If I came home after fighting with my friends, I would also get angry here and then my mother would tell me that I have changed my character.*

When Mulatu’s mother said, “Your character has changed very much” partly she was disapproving the fact that he is expressing his anger openly. In addition, from the discussion I had with many of the other children it was clear that the children became less obedient to parents when they quarrelled with their friends. Responding to my question about reasons for disobedience, Solomon who told me earlier that he likes to run errands for his family and neighbours, for example, said:

*...sometimes when I come home angry from outside [with my friends] I also get angry here [at home] and I refuse to obey.*

As will be discussed in the next chapter, obedience was a decisive factor for having a good relationship with parents.

According to the children's accounts, the main reason for conflict between friends was failing or declining to be there for each other (see also Chapter 7). The children articulated this, among other things, in terms of refusing: to play together, to support each other at work and helping each other during conflict with other children. For the girls, betrayal of a secret was a major cause of conflict among friends.

### ***Negative peer experiences***

Many of the children (mainly boys) also reported negative peer experiences as a major cause of sadness and distress. Unlike the boys who played and spent a lot of time with peers (i.e. "children in the neighbourhood"), many of the girls had a very limited number of "close friends". This might be because of their limited mobility. Interviews with many of the boys and girls indicate that most parents/caregivers did not allow girls to go far from their houses. Mulatu, for example, noted, "They [the girls] play with us only if we play near our house. They do not go to the football field like us [the boys]. Their family would not allow them". The fact that the girls did not go far from their houses (possibly for security reasons and their responsibilities at home) might hold back them from interacting with a wide circle of friends. Perhaps for this reason few of them mentioned peer rejection as a source of sadness. Nevertheless, Mamitu, Tena and Senbet played and spent a good amount of time with children in their neighbourhood (both boys and girls), despite their parents' disapproval of their going far from their houses and playing with boys (for more on cross-gender friendship see chapter 7). What was common about these girls is that compared to the other girls all of them had few responsibilities at home.

The children articulated negative peer experiences in terms of exclusion/discrimination, verbal and physical attack. Many of the boys talked about exclusion/discrimination in terms of not being able to play football with peers or "friends in the neighbourhood":

*Beth: What makes you sad?*

*Endalk: ... here [in this neighbourhood] I become sad when they [children in the neighbourhood] refuse to let me in while they play football. When they play with their own ball, the big one, and when they refuse to let me in I say to them 'didn't I allow you to play with my plastic ball [a ball which is made of discarded plastic bags]'.*

*They would say that my plastic bag ball did not compare with their big ball and would refuse to let me in. As a result, I get extremely distressed.*

*Beth: Do you get depressed?*

*Mulatu: Sometimes I get depressed [...] In relation to my friends [in the neighbourhood], if I quarrel with them [or] if they quarrel with me [I will get depressed] because if one [of them] fought with me he would not allow me to play with his ball [and then] I get very depressed.*

*Beth: If you only fought with one of them, could not you play with the rest of them?*

*Mulatu: The others also would be on his side [because the ball belongs to him]. Only some [children] would try to reconcile. Others they will exclude you from the group, exclude you from the football team, etc. [You know where you stand] if they go to play football without informing you or if, upon your arrival, they excuse themselves of being tired and disperse. [You would know] when they do not want to play with you.*

The emphasis these children gave to playing football makes more sense when one considers the increasing importance of football in the lives of urban Ethiopian children and young people. It is now very common almost in every part of Addis Ababa (and even in the country side) to see children and young people playing football often with balls made from rolled-up discarded plastic bags and clothes on dust fields (Bethlehem, 2006). English Premiership football matches are also very popular across the country. In fact, during the early stage of my fieldwork talking about English teams such as Manchester United and Arsenal (nationwide favourites) helped me to establish rapport with my boy informants.

It appears that material disadvantage was a major reason for exclusion: Endalk was excluded for having a ball made of plastic bags rather than a “big ball” (which would have cost approximately 30 birr) and Mulatu for quarrelling with the owner of a ball. Mulatu and other children also indicated that inability to entertain peers due to not having money in their pockets and being unable to invite peers to one’s house to watch a movie together or share food during festivals/holidays were reasons for exclusion:

*Beth: Are there other reasons for exclusion?*

*Mulatu: If you have money [or something valuable] they will make sure not to fall out with you. They will have a good behaviour at least until you run out of what you possess. For instance, if there is a meal at one of the children’s houses they will “become” friends with that child. They will do everything this child wants. If this child quarrels with you, they will be on his side. Even if this child admits that he was the one at fault, they will go to the extent of persuading him that he is right and you were wrong. Or if one of the children rents a cassette [a video cassette] they will pretend to be friends with him until they will have watched that film with him. Or if*

*you have some cash on your hands they will make peace with you until your money is finished.*

This in a way meant that children who did not get pocket money at all tended to be permanently excluded whereas those who managed to get hold of some cash from time to time (for example by working part-time jobs, running errands for neighbours, on holidays, etc) moved in and out of favour. However, as indicated in Bereket's and Hezera's quote below, many of the children resented interacting with opportunistic peers:

*Beth: What do you and your peers in this neighbourhood do to have fun?*

*Bereket: I do not get along with children in this neighbourhood.*

*Beth: what is the reason?*

*Bereket: I only get along with Dawit. I do not get along with the rest of the children [in the neighbourhood]. They betray you for the sake of coins [money].*

*Beth: Please explain that to me.*

*Bereket: If, for instance, they get hold of some cash, they will avoid me; if they run out, they will come to me. That is why I do not get along with them.*

*Beth: What other things are difficult regarding friends?*

*Hezera: ...some children approach you just to get something out of you. [...] There is such a child. His name is Anuar. [Nevertheless] we [my friends and me] call him Asheke.*

*Beth: What does that mean?*

*Hezera: It is a short form of [the word] Ashekabach [literally opportunist].*

*Beth: How do you deal with him?*

*Hezera: We try to avoid him...*

Weighed against their resentment of interacting with opportunistic peers was the fact that they did not like to be excluded. Bereket who said earlier that he does not get along with children in his neighbourhood because "they betray you for the sake of coins [money]" said:

*Beth: Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do and feel)?*

*Bereket: Sometimes I am happy and sometimes I am not happy.*

*Beth: Please explain that to me.*

*Bereket: I become happy if I get the chance to play football with my friends on a regular basis without discrimination. I get frustrated a lot because my friends here [in this neighbourhood] do not want me to play.*

*Beth: What do you mean?*

*Bereket: They do not want me to be with them. I also dislike being with them. At one point they asked me if I wanted to play with them but I said no. They tried to force me but I said no because I knew that they asked me to join them just because they were short by one person to complete the team.*

Some of the children also mentioned that they and their friends exclude and tease a child who has a character that is not acceptable to their peer group, as Belete explained:

*Here [in this neighbourhood] we keep our distance from a child who insults people. We isolate him. The same holds true for a child who steals. We keep our distance from him and tease him. We do this to force him to desist from such an activity...*

Often the children's definition of 'acceptable character' was shaped by what their parents/caregivers considered appropriate. Many children said their parents do not want them to associate with some children. They used the word *durye* [literally hooligan] to describe these children. A *durye*, according to the children, is someone who does not obey and respect her parents, neighbours or older people; someone who does not study hard and who likes to spend her time in 'undesirable places':

*There is a Dureye boy called Addisu [in this neighbourhood]. He has no friends. If our parents see us with him, they will punish us. They tell us not to be with him. Now nobody talks to him and he is lonely*

Endalk, a 12-year-old boy

It appears that exclusion affected interviewed children more in the neighbourhood than at school. As Mulatu explained below this was partly because the children spent more time in the neighbourhood than with peers at school:

*..At school, for example, when two children fight with each other if one of them is big or have something (always they want to be with you if you have something [they want]) they will avoid the other [child]. It is just same as [what happens] in the neighbourhood. [...] However, because we spend small amount of time together at school (it is only during a break time that we meet) this is not much of a problem.*

This might be partly because, although most of them lived in a poor neighbourhoods, in their neighbourhood there was a greater chance of interacting with non-poor children than at their school. Almost all of them went to government schools, which often cater for children from a lower economic status.

The other negative peer experience that was a source of anger and resentment for many of the children (both boys and girls) was teasing. Repeatedly the children said they become angry and even get into a fight when they are teased. The most common types of teasing

were saying “bad words”, or insulting mothers, physical appearance, health and school performance. For example, both Senayte and Endalk were teased about their appearance; Senayte for not being sufficiently feminine and Endalk for having a swollen upper lip.

*Beth: What things/issues make you sad?*

*Senayte: My friends at school tease me about my hair. They say my hair is like the boys. When this happens, I become sad. I pretend that I do not take their teasing seriously but inside I would be very sad.*

Endalk’s story was particularly interesting as it illustrated how children become vulnerable to teasing (e.g. through poor educational performance), how teases can build upon each other, and how an authority figure’s intervention can sometimes turn teasing into bullying. His comment that “if I get low results on exams they will tease me” was interesting in light of the emphasis most of the children put on “school achievement”, as discussed in chapter 7.

*Beth: What makes you angry?*

*Endalk: ... At school, they [children at my school] make me angry by calling me names. If, for instance, a teacher disparages me by saying something, everybody would keep mocking me by repeating what that teacher said. They would repeat the insult so many times until it sticks and almost becomes a nickname for me. That is how some kids at school came to refer to me as “Kilo kenfer” [a kilogram of lips]. I had a normal upper lip until recently. For reasons that I do not know it had gotten swollen and would not subside. It is still not normal. After a teacher used this expression to rebuke me, everybody started to refer to me as “kilo kenfer”, “kilo kenfer”. I resent this very much. I often enter into a fight with kids on this, at least with those who are not bigger than me. I worry, though, that my lips might get even more swollen if I am hit during the fights.... In addition, if I get low results on exams they will tease me*

It seems that the children gave more weight to teasing (“bad words”) about their mother than other forms of teasing. Quite a number of them said they get angry, sad or hurt when they hear “bad words” about their mother. Poluha (2004: 146) also reflected this in her work among Addis Ababa school children. One possible explanation for this, she noted, is that since most children were very much attached to their mothers “they used her name to get at the one they wanted to hurt since they knew that an insult of the mother would be most deeply felt”. In addition to that, I think, in my study some of the “bad words” said about mothers seem to relate to socio-economic status and ethnicity. For example, Melese whose mother belongs to a “minority” ethnic group (*Dorze*) and earns a living by selling

fire wood said he becomes “very angry” when one of the boys insults his mother: “he insults my mother by saying ‘a child of *menamenta* [degraded, worthless (of people)]’, a child of *Gematam* [stinking, having a bad smell, putrid]. I get very angry and I will hit him”.

### **Conflict between children and neighbours and the effect of conflicts between parents and neighbours on children’s wellbeing**

The children reported that negative relationships with neighbours affected their wellbeing in three ways. First, if the children or their parents had bad relationships with neighbours the children would not get support from these neighbours. As will be discussed in chapter 7, getting support (such as material and emotional) from neighbours was very important for the children’s wellbeing.

The children’s relationship with neighbours was defined in terms of whether the children were obedient and respectful to them or not. That is, a child who obeyed and respected her neighbours would have a good relationship with them and a child who did not obey and respect her neighbours would not have a good relationship with them. However, the kinds of relationship parents had with neighbours also affected the kinds of relationship their children had with these neighbours. Bereket who relied on the support of his neighbours for daily food explained:

*Beth: Do you obey your neighbours?*

*Bereket: I was obedient to them. However, after they quarrelled with Bedilu [my caregiver] I started to say no to them. Now, I run errands only for Dade [one of our neighbours] since the rest have quarrelled with Bedilu.*

*Beth: What will happen when you obey and disobey your neighbours?*

*Bereket: When I refuse [to obey], they say ‘you only rush for food’*

*Beth: What does that mean?*

*Bereket: [They are saying] ‘you only care about our food. If we ask you to come for food, you will come very quickly but you retreat when we ask you to do something for us’.*

*Beth: How about when you obey them?*

*Bereket: If I say okay and obey them, they will give me food sometimes when I get very hungry. However, if I do not obey them they will not feed me*

Hezera had a similar problem as even though he and his older sister relied on their neighbours for food and clothing “he [my caregiver] has quarrelled with our neighbours. So when we [my sister and I] go to our neighbours’ house. [...] he threatens us with chasing us



out of the house. If we come at 7:30 pm, he will close the door and will not let us in. It is after a long begging and the intervention of our neighbours that he lets us in”.

Second, “bad relationship” with neighbours was expressed by many of the children in terms of “being lonely”. Many of them said a child who does not get along with the community (meaning their neighbours) would face a problem because she will be lonely. Partly, this was related to the fact that a child who does not get along with neighbours will have a little or no chance of getting along with peers/friends, as described below.

Third, as mentioned above, the kind of relationship the children had with neighbours appears to affect the kind of relationship they had with peers. This was particularly because parents influenced their children’s choice of friends. The children’s accounts suggest that if a child had a bad relationship with neighbours (mainly this happened because she was disobedient and disrespectful) parents would tell their child not to be with that child. This partly explained why many of the children appeared to be more sensitive to opinions held by their neighbours about them than what their parents think of them. For example, most of them said that they are more obedient to their neighbours than to their parents. One of the reasons put forward by the children was that it is more difficult to say no to neighbours than to parents. When I asked them why it is difficult to say “no” to neighbours than to one’s parents most of them answered that if they refused to obey neighbours they would call them a *balege* [a rude person]:

*Habtu: If I said no to my neighbours, they would say Habtu has become rude and I do not like that.*

*Mamitu: I obey our neighbours more than I obey my parents... if I say no to them they will say, ‘the child of so and so has become balege [rude]’ and this is not nice.*

As discussed in the previous section, children who were seen as having socially undesirable characteristics, i.e. those who are labelled as *balege* by neighbours were often excluded by their friends and peers. Moreover, as Mamitu’s quote above suggests refusing to obey neighbours might reflect badly on family: “the child of so and so has become *balege*”.

### **5.2.2. Inability to fulfil material needs**

Inability to fulfil basic needs (such as food, clothing and shelter) and to cover expenses such as fee for a neighbourhood football team was mentioned by the children who lived in

single-parent families as a cause of unhappiness. Belete lived in a male-absent single-parent family. All family members including his mother depended on daily labour (such as washing clothes for payment) for survival. In response to my question about what things make him unhappy, he replied:

*When there is nothing at home, when there is no food at home. Sometimes they [family members] come home [from work as daily labourers] with nothing. When she [my mother] tries to borrow [money] from the neighbours they would say 'we don't have money'. Often our neighbours also do not have enough money [...] if basic needs-cloth, shelter and food-were fulfilled I would be happy.*

The account of Eleni who lived in a female-absent single-parent family suggests that in addition to the limited financial capacity of parents, not having money of their own to spend during holidays was another source of unhappiness for these children:

*Beth: Tell me about you past unhappy memories.*

*Eleni: The day I was very unhappy was on Hoyahoye [festival of transfiguration of Christ]. [On that day] I went to have fun with my friends but I did not have enough [amount of] money on my hands. My friends pulled their money together and paid for my expenses. [But] I was very unhappy for not being able to pay for myself.*

These children perceived material disadvantage as a cause of unhappiness mainly when they compared their situation with that of peers, particularly with those who they saw as better off than them. This was especially true for those children who did part-time jobs (such as shoe shining) because these children had greater chance of interacting with children from better off families than those who did not work. Dino, a 12-year-old boy, lived in a male-absent single-parent family. He worked as a shoeshine in the nearby market. Responding to my question about how happy he is with his life, he replied:

*With my current life, I am not happy, but I am not also too unhappy. It is okay [...] I feel a little unhappy when I have such thoughts [like]...when I see kids my age who come from richer families who enjoy cycling or afford to buy good balls to play football with. I feel sad for having been born to a poor family [...] but when I play with friends who live in similar economic conditions I am not reminded of my condition and I forget about my unhappiness.*

In Ethiopia, holidays/festivals (like New Year's Day, Christmas and Easter) particularly create a situation that causes these children to compare their condition with that of their

peers. In Ethiopia (mainly in urban areas), buying new clothing for children during holidays such as New Year's Day and Christmas is seen by many parents as part of celebrating these holidays. Holidays are also when people prepare "good" quality food such as *Doro wet*<sup>16</sup>. Inability to stand equal with peers during holidays, therefore, especially made these children unhappy:

*Beth: What do you think children of your age need to be happy in their life?*

*Belete: [They need] basic needs like clothing, shelter and food...*

*Beth: Are you able to get the resources you have just mentioned to me?*

*Belete: Not all of them. Right now, [for example] the New Year's holiday is approaching and they are telling me that they are not going to buy clothes for me because they do not have money. Earlier, I said to you that I do not care much about having new clothes. However, I become very sad when all the children [in this neighbourhood] wear new clothes except me.*

Similarly, when asked about his past unhappy memories, Habtu who also lived in a male-absent single-parent family recounted how:

*On the last New Year's Day, when all children were bought new clothes except me, tears came to my eyes; my mother finally managed to buy me clothes. She had to borrow money from our neighbours to do so.*

Material poverty also affected these children's wellbeing by inhibiting their social participation, e.g. by preventing them from participating in activities that their peers enjoyed such as going to a school trip as Dino described below:

*Beth: Tell me about your past unhappy memories.*

*Dino: One day, two years ago, students of my school contributed 25 birr each and went by bus on a trip to visit places. I was very unhappy when all students went but not some children and me...*

### **5.2.3. Lack of physical security**

The children's accounts suggest that lack of physical security was a source of fear and worry for both the boys and girls. The type and degree of lack of physical security expressed by the children, however, differed according to their gender. That is, in most case, the girls expressed lack of physical security in terms of risks of rape, verbal and physical sexual harassment from older boys and adult men while the boys expressed it in terms of a fear of physical attack from older boys. Compared to the boys, the girls also

reported many more instances of lack of physical security. Many of the girls expressed fear of rape, verbal and physical sexual harassment in their neighbourhood, on the street, at workplace and school. Eleni, for example, said a risk of rape at her school is what she considers “a major problem”:

*Beth: What does it mean to you when bad things happen (e.g. to a child of your age)?*  
*Eleni: What I consider a major problem is, for example, many girls in our school are at a risk of rape. [...] Last time one girl was raped in the toilet. She has now discontinued her education. This, I think, is a major problem.*

Esub said that her fear of harassment at her school and in her neighbourhood means that she does not go anywhere alone:

*Beth: Do you feel free and safe when you are with your friends?*  
*Esub: Yes. Actually, I will not go alone anywhere. When I go to school or run errands, I always go with my friend. When I go with her, I do not get scared even when men harass me on the street or at school.*  
*Beth: Do men harass you on the street and at school?*  
*Esub: Yes, at school the boys do different kinds of bad things. They ask you different kinds of questions. I myself have experienced this. One of the boys in my class used to harass me. I could not even go to the toilet alone [...] and in our way to school, there are those who throw stone on us or insult us by saying different disgusting things.*

Like Esub, many of the girls said they prefer to do things (such as going to school and church, running errands) in the company of their friends rather than alone. It appears that “being alone” was perceived by many of them as something physically dangerous as well as emotionally discomforting. In response to my question about what it means to her when bad things happen to a girl of her age, Tsbay, a 13-year-old girl, for example, replied: “when she is alone if somebody comes and rape her”.

It also appears that the girls’ feeling of lack of physical security increased with age. For example, during my first phase of fieldwork, Mamitu, a 13-year-old girl, used to work as a daily labourer (i.e. fetching water for payment for merchants who sell used clothes) in a nearby Market to support her family and herself. Nevertheless, when I met her during my second phase of fieldwork, which was a year later, she had stopped working. She told me that “as a grown up girl” it is difficult to work in a place where there are “many men”. She said she and all her friends, except the young ones, had stopped work due to fear of harassment from men in the market place. This is, I think, understandable given the fact

that the girls' feeling of lack of physical security was related to fear of sexual harassment (both verbal and physical). In Ethiopia, according to 485 young Ethiopian women included in a retrospective survey on violence against girls by the African Child Policy Forum, "the age at which girls seem to be most vulnerable to almost all types of sexual violence is between the ages of 14 and 17 years old" (The African Child Policy Forum, 2006a: 57). One possible reason for this, the study noted, is that girls of this age have greater opportunity to interact with potential perpetrators both at school and in their neighbourhood than younger girls do. Conversely, it seems that for the boys a feeling of lack of physical security (which was mainly related to fear of attack from older boys) decreased with age and physical maturity.

The girls' feeling of lack of physical security is not also surprising when one considers that rape, verbal and physical sexual harassment against girls are common occurrences in Ethiopia (The African Child Policy Forum, 2006a; 2006b). Of the 485 young Ethiopian women included in the survey by the forum, for instance, 332 said they had been sexually abused when they were a child. The most common forms of sexual abuse being verbal abuse, touching a girl's private parts and rape. And the study concluded that about seven in every ten girls in Ethiopia are sexually abused and "of the population sampled, three out of ten girls were raped before they were 18 years old" (2006a: 55) and the risk of sexual assault increases greatly at night (Lalor, 1997). This also explained many of the girls' fear of being outside home (even at their neighbours' house) after dark:

*Beth: Tell me about your current fear/s.*

*Eleni: The thing I fear now is my sister goes and sits at other people's house. She does not come home even when it gets dark. She does not come home unless my father or I go and fetch her. I am not happy about that. I fear to sit at other people's house at night.*

*Beth: Why is that?*

*Eleni: That is because now a day it is dangerous to sit at other people's house at night. There is a risk of rape and there are different kinds of diseases these days. There is HIV...*

The fear of being outside home after dark was also mentioned by many of the boys in relation to being sent on errands at night and even going to the toilet after dark. Almost all of my informants used communal pit latrines that were located outside their residential compound. Some of the boys also expressed fear of physical attack from older boys during daytime:

*Beth: Tell me about the main worries you currently have*

*Alemu: I get scared very quickly. When I come back from school I sometimes worry that I may come across Duryewoch [literally hooligans] and they may hit me. Sometimes when I see them from distance, I change my direction and run away. Because I get scared quickly, I refuse to go to the shop if it is after 7pm. I even get scared to go to the toilet alone after 7pm.*

For some of the girls and boys the disturbance in Addis Ababa that followed the May 2005 election was also a source of fear and worry. Endalk who lived with his parents, three older brothers and sisters, for example, said,

*Beth: Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced personally*

*Endalk: I faced a number of challenges. However, the most difficult one was at the time of the war, at the time of the disturbance. I was very worried that they [government officials] would take my brother. I heard that they take young men from their houses. Even now when I see police officers, I fear a lot...*

In responding to my question about what children of her age need to survive, Eleni who lost her mother in connection with the disturbance that followed the election also replied, “There might be a disturbance in their area so they should be protected from going to that area”, suggesting that the memory of her mother’s death was still present.

#### **5.2.4. Ill health and disability**

Many of the children who lost one or two of their parents and in a few cases caregivers reported ill health and death of parents/caregivers as a reason for unhappiness. Hezera lost his parents at an early age. His grandmother who died six months before I met him raised him. He said:

*Beth: Tell me about your unhappy memories.*

*Hezera: on a Christmas day, I am always unhappy. Last Christmas, for example, I was planning to spend the day happily after making a Christmas tree. Then my grandmother got ill and the [Christmas] tree was thrown away. She [my grandmother] took a bed for the next three years and died on a Christmas day. For that reason, I do not like Christmas days<sup>17</sup>.*

Eleni lived with her father and stepmother after the death of her mother in connection with the disturbance that followed the May 2005 election in Addis Ababa. Her mother used to sell *Injera*<sup>18</sup> in the market place and her father works as a guard. After the death of her

mother, the financial condition of the family seemed to improve because her stepmother started to work for a government company that produces food oil and earned more than Eleni's mother earn. Moreover, Eleni said her father started to contribute more money to the family. For example, she said after the death of her mother he bought household goods like chairs. However, responding to my question about whether she is happy with her life, Eleni replied:

*Eleni: I am not that much happy with my current life. When I compare my current life with [my life] when my mother was alive I prefer [my life] when she was alive. I would be happy if I could live with my mother even eating whatever there is at home.*

Apart from the traumatic experience of losing loved ones, these children's accounts suggest that after the death of parents, particularly mothers or mother figures (like grandmothers) their living condition (both materially and emotionally) has deteriorated. Even Eleni whose family's financial condition seemed to improve after the death of her mother (as described above) was not exception to this. Comparing her situation before and after the death of her mother, she said:

*...for example, during last Hoyahoye [festival of transfiguration of Christ] I had fifty cents on my hands [and] when all [my friends] put on an earring I said to myself what about me and then I bought one. I was not also bought clothes. For that reason, I am not living a good life. There are also things, which are not done for me. My mother could have taken me to the hairdresser [if she was alive]. She could have bought me different jewelleries. For these reasons, I am not living happily. I lived a good life when my mother was alive.*

This might be because, as described on page 95-96, often mothers rather than fathers were the main source of income and emotional support for the children.

Aside from death of parents and caregivers, some of the children talked about sickness (of self and parents) as a reason for unhappiness. Habtu lived in a male-absent single-parent family. He noted:

*Beth: what are the things that make you happy?*

*Habtu: ... our family faces problems that others don't face, like getting ill for instance. I would have been very happy if none of us falls ill. Nevertheless, it does happen.*

*Beth: what causes the illnesses?*

*Habtu: I do not know the reason; maybe it is because of poor hygiene.*

*Beth: Is any one ill in the house right now?*

*Habtu: my mother, for instance, is ill because of typhoid and typhus. Moreover, all of us have tonsillitis. We also have eye problems.*

Mulatu, whose mother was sick during the time of the interview, described how sickness could be a reason for exclusion:

*The problem with children in this area is that they exaggerate your sickness. Because they exaggerate, they put a distance between them and you. [...] If you are sick and make a mistake while playing, they will tease you by saying ‘was your sickness a mental one?’ They tease you very badly.*

A 13-year-old boy

Many of the children also expressed fear of disability particularly in relation to a car accident. Almost all of them worried that they may experience a car accident. This is not surprising given the fact that most of them lived near a ring road that is notorious for frequent car accidents and for lack of play grounds some of them were forced to play on the asphalt road (which is the main road and therefore very busy). In response to my question about what it means to them when something bad happens to a child of their age, many of them replied, “When a car accident occurs”. In fact two of my informants (a boy and girl) experienced a car accident on more than one occasion, reflecting the fact that Ethiopia has the highest rate of fatalities per vehicle in the world and road accidents in Addis Ababa constitutes 65% of total accidents that occurred in the country (Addis Ababa Road Transport Office, 2008). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the children were even more afraid of disability than being killed by a car accident. Probably, the children’s fear of disability tells us something about how disability is conceptualized in the research area in particular and in Ethiopia in general (Tirusew, 2005). Belete, for example, said:

*Beth: What does it mean to you when bad things happen (e.g. to a child of your age)?*

*Belete: ...when he cannot find something to eat and drink. The reason he cannot find something to eat and drink is when he is disabled. [In fact] disability is a major problem by itself. It is a disabled child who should be helped. Others [those who are not disabled] can work and find something to eat and drink.*

Belete’s remark that a disabled child cannot work so cannot find something to eat and drink, and therefore should be helped seems to depict disabled children as passive victims.



One of the very few studies on disability in Ethiopia (Tirusew, 2005) indicates that in Ethiopia because a child's disability is often perceived as a consequence of an evil deed by parents or proof of divine retribution, disabled children are often victims of discrimination. This includes social exclusion, lack of opportunities for education and employment, acts of violence (physical, sexual, psychological) and stereotyped societal perception.

### 5.3. Risks as Identified in “Task-based” Methods

In their drawings, the children indicated issues that put them at risk in response to the theme “Things/people/places I dislike/fear”. The following table shows those that were mentioned by most of the children in their drawings, in approximate order of importance:

Table 5: Risks as indicated in the children's drawings

<b>In my neighbourhood Things/people/places I dislike/ fear</b>	<b>At my school Things/people/places I dislike/fear</b>
Fighting between friends and ‘children in the neighbourhood’ [peers] (4 boys and 2 girls)	The school toilet (5 boys and a girl)
Filthy surrounding (3 boys and 3 girls)	A teacher who hits and shouts at students (5 boys)
Going to ‘undesirable places’ such as <i>video houses</i> [places where movies are seen at a cheaper price]; playing table football; going to <i>Shisha</i> and <i>Chat bet</i> [places where Khat and other stimulants are sold] (3 boys)	A child who skips class and goes out of school by climbing the school fence (3 boys)
Being sent on errands at night (2 boys)	The forest (the densely wooded area) in our school- it is very scary (a boy and a girl)

Some of these issues (such as “fighting between friends and children in the neighbourhood” and “being sent on errands at night”) emerged in the individual interviews I had with the children. But in their drawings the children also depicted issues which did not come out in the individual interviews including “filthy surrounding”, “the school toilet”, “going to ‘undesirable places’ such as video houses; playing table football; going to *shisha* and *chat bet*” (see figure 11, below) and “a teacher who hits and shouts at students”. It is also interesting to note gender differences in the issues the children dislike and fear, and even in the explanations, they gave for similar pictures. For example, "the school toilet" was mentioned by nearly half of the children as something that they do not like at school. For the boys this was because it is filthy and old and they described how children's waste is all over the floor and how the floor itself is falling to pieces. For a girl, who depicted similar

issues in her picture, in addition to its filth, the school toilet is far away from the main building and located next to the boys' toilet in a forest, which, according to her, makes it suitable for rape and other sexual abuse. Here it is worth mentioning that most of the children I interviewed go to government schools, which have similar toilet facilities.



Figure 11: Thematic drawing by a 12-year old boy of "gambling"; "addicts"; "chewing *Khat*" and "smoking cigarettes"

#### 5.4. Discussion

How do the risks identified in the children's accounts compare with the risks that have been identified in the theoretical and empirical literature on children living in poverty? In contrast to much of the child poverty literature, which conceptualizes material disadvantage as a major risk to the wellbeing of children in poverty (see chapter 2), in the children's accounts *negative relationships* emerged as a major risk to their sense of wellbeing. Negative relationships included conflict between and with parents, conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents, conflict with friends, peers and neighbours. Poverty or material disadvantage was taken to be a direct risk to wellbeing only by the children who

came from single-parent families. The majority of the children from two-parent families and most of the children who lived with caregivers did not talk about their poverty as a risk to their wellbeing. This was not because the children from single-parent families were poorer than the rest of the children or the children from two-parent families and those who lived with caregivers did not feel about their poverty. Actually, the financial and economic conditions of the children from single-parent families were generally better than all the children who lived with caregivers and a few of the children who lived with two parents. Rather, when the children were faced with more than one risk to their wellbeing (e.g. poverty and conflict between their parents) they tended to prioritize the risk that has the greatest effect on their sense of wellbeing. This means the children from two-parent families and those who lived with caregivers were worried by other risks such as conflict between parents and mistreatment much greater than their shortages of basic things in life like food, sleeping space, clothing etc. This argument becomes even more plausible when one considers the fact that none of the children who talked about poverty as a risk to their wellbeing mentioned any other ‘significant’ risk to their wellbeing.

Nonetheless, this finding may not be generalisable as the children I interviewed were not just poor children. The majority of them did not live in two parent households (see Table 4 on page 70-71), which would be relatively uncommon in a poor rural site. The types of household my informants lived in reflected the local reality. As described in chapter 4, orphanhood and single parenthood are common in Kolfe area (Feleke et al, 2006).

In linking the children’s subjective accounts of risk with the larger literature and exploring any similarities and differences between them, it is also important to acknowledge that children’s subjective accounts of risk could be affected by factors such as adaptation, lack of knowledge and limited horizons. In relation to adaptation, for example, a number of studies (reviewed in Clark, 2007) have demonstrated that people (including children) can adapt to poverty and other forms of disadvantage by cutting down their wants, hopes and aspirations. The fact that the majority of interviewed children did not talk about poverty as a risk to their wellbeing may be because they adapted to their poverty and were comfortable with what little they have. Nevertheless, as Clark (2007: 26) argues, it is also equally important to recognize that adaptation is not universal i.e. “Aspirations do not systematically adapt to reflect objective circumstances or living conditions for all people. Nor do aspirations adjust across all domains of well-being”.

It can also be argued that poor children may lack sufficient knowledge and experience regarding alternative ways of life to make informed judgments and choices. However, as Clark (2007: 8) argues, again “in an increasingly global and multicultural world it is no longer realistic to suppose that the poor and deprived lack sufficient knowledge about alternative life styles to make informed judgments”. I think this was the case for the majority of my informants. For example, although most of the interviewed children lived in poor neighbourhoods and went to government schools that often cater for children from a lower economic status, they had the opportunity to know about alternative life styles through TV programmes and movies. Most of them followed TV programmes and movies by going to their neighbours’ houses. Some of them (particularly the boys) could even watch recently released UK and American movies by going to video houses where these movies are illegally copied and made available at a very cheap price.

In terms of conflict between parents, the accounts of the children who lived in two parent families suggest that conflict between their parents affected their sense of wellbeing both directly and indirectly. Directly, it caused them emotional distress and anxiety, and indirectly it affected their sense of wellbeing through its negative effect on their relationships with other people (such as friends) and educational performance. The few qualitative studies on the experiences and perspectives of poor children in developed countries have little to say about the negative effects of conflict between parents on children’s wellbeing. However, many developmentally oriented child poverty studies (e.g. Duncan et al, 1994) have long conceptualized marital conflict as a mediator in the relation between poverty or low socio-economic status and children’s negative adjustment outcomes such as socio-emotional problems. It has been argued that by creating financial pressure or stress on parents, poverty leads to marital conflict and marital conflict, in turn, affects children negatively by decreasing their parents’ parenting capacity (e.g. Conger et al. 1994).

The data in my study, however, do not provide sufficient evidence to directly link conflict between parents to poverty, and the children’s socio-emotional problems to their parents’ poor parenting capacity. For example, although all the children who lived in two-parent families lived in poverty or faced economic hardship, not all of them experienced conflict between their parents. Of the nine children who lived in two parent families, only five of them reported conflict between their parents. However, at the same time, the

accounts of the children who experienced conflict between their parents suggest that often reasons for disagreement and violence at home were related to financial/material issues. Again, the children who faced conflict between their parents did not say they were distressed because of their parents' poor parenting capacity *per se*. Rather, they were worried because they thought that one of their parents or adult carers (especially women) might get physically hurt in the course of fights, and they found witnessing frequent fights and arguments between their parents very distressing.

With regard to conflict with parents, in the accounts of the children who lived in two parent and male absent single parent families negative relationships with mothers (in terms of, for example, conflict with mothers, and mothers discriminating against the children in favour of their siblings and not praising them for obedience) emerged as a source of irritation and unhappiness. A number of developmentally oriented child poverty studies argued that parents who experience economic hardship tend to have problematic relationships with their children because poverty negatively affects their parenting capacity (e.g. Aber et al, 1997). Two ways in which economic hardship can affect parenting capacity were identified. First, economic hardship creates financial pressure or stress, which in turn brings about emotional distress on parents. Parents' emotional distress affects children's adjustment through a direct link with parenting practices that are harsh, inconsistent, emotionally unsupportive and conflictual (e.g. Conger et al, 1992, 1994). Second, economic hardship causes stress which results in parents' emotional distress. Parents' emotional distress increases marital conflict. Marital conflict decreases marital satisfaction and happiness in general, which in combination negatively affect quality of parenting (e.g. McLeod and Shanahan, 1996). In the children's accounts, although there is no evidence that links their mother's parenting capacity with poverty, it is fair to assume that the many responsibilities their mothers had (such as being the only source of income for the family, taking care of their children single-handedly) have created stress on them that might negatively affect their relationships with their children. The few qualitative studies on children in poverty, as indicated in a recent systematic review (Redmond, 2008), have little to say about the effect of negative relationships with parents on children's wellbeing.

The accounts of many of the children who lived with caregivers (relatives and neighbours) suggest that mistreatment at the hands of caregivers was a major cause of distress for them. They articulated mistreatment in terms of beating, threats, not being

allowed to play with friends (generally restricted movement) and being discriminated in favour of other children in the family. Some of these children were also affected by the physical and psychological consequences of separation from their siblings who lived with other caregivers. The situation of these children resembles what some studies (e.g. Atwine et al, 2005) have documented in relation to HIV/AIDS orphans in Africa. However, I should emphasise that I am not suggesting that all the children who lived with caregivers were mistreated. A few of the children who lived with caregivers did talk about the consistent care and support they received from their caregivers. I agree with Abebe and Aase (2007: 2067) in suggesting that ethnographic research on the “complex cultural politics of care” is needed before drawing any conclusions about the quality of care orphans receive from care-providing families.

Negative relationships with friends and peers adversely affected the sense of wellbeing of the children from all types of families. Conflict with friends that was mainly expressed in terms of not being able to play with friends had negative effects on the children’s emotional wellbeing. Most of them indicated that they become ‘sad’, ‘worried’ and ‘depressed’ when they quarrel with their friends. Inability to play with friends affected the children negatively mainly because they could not use their friends’ play materials such as balls and to have fun they needed the company of their friends as they conceptualized play as a group activity. Some of the children perceived “quarrelling with friends” as akin to having no friends and as a result being lonely. Moreover, when they talked about the risk posed by loneliness they referred to the experience of loneliness rather than the possibility that lonely children might be isolated and have no financial and material support. The children’s accounts also suggest that their quality of relationship with their friends affected the quality of their relationship with parents. These findings reflect past psychological research, particularly in the UK and US (e.g. Berndt and Murphy, 2002) that show that the quality of children’s friendships (whether it is positive or negative) has implications for their psycho-social development. Many of these studies focused on the effects of positive aspects of friendship (such as intimacy) on children’s outcomes. For example, in terms of cultivating their self-esteem, improving their social adjustment and increasing their ability to cope with stressors. But a few of them (e.g. Ladd et al., 1996) also suggest that negative friendship features such as conflict and rivalry can be very damaging from children psycho-social development, although they hardly explained how.

Negative peer experiences were reasons for sadness and distress for many of the boys. This is in line with past psychological research mainly in the United States that show that there is a link between peer rejection and emotional problems in children (e.g. Parkhurst and Asher, 1992). The two most common negative peer experiences mentioned by the children were exclusion and teasing. In addition, their accounts suggest that the major reason for exclusion and to some extent for teasing was material disadvantage. These findings support qualitative studies on children in poverty (e.g. Rocker, 1998; Ridge, 2002; Van der Hoek, 2005) which show that economic disadvantage can hold children back from interacting with peers. It also strengthens past psychological research that indicates that poor children, relative to non-poor children, are more likely to be unpopular and to be rejected by their peers (e.g. Bolger et al., 1995).

Negative relationships with neighbours adversely affected the children's sense of wellbeing in three ways. First, if the children or their parents had bad relationships with neighbours the children would not get support from these neighbours. Getting support (such as material and emotional) from neighbours was very important for the children's sense of wellbeing. Second, "bad relationship" with neighbours meant, "being lonely", which many of the children conceptualized as a problem. Third, the kind of relationship the children had with neighbours affected the kind of relationship they had with peers. Friends and peers often excluded children who were seen as having socially undesirable characteristics, i.e. those who are labelled as *balege* (rude) by neighbours. The importance of neighbours in poor children's lives is documented extensively in qualitative and ethnographic studies that examine the lives of poor African children in the context of HIV/AIDS (e.g. Henderson, 2006)

The children who lived in single-parent families mentioned material disadvantage as a cause of unhappiness. These children perceived material disadvantage as a cause of unhappiness mainly when they compared their situation with that of peers, particularly with those who they saw as better off than them. This point echoes Redmond (2008) who writes that "what concerns children is not lack of resources per se, but exclusion from activities that other children appear to take for granted, and embarrassment and shame at not being able to participate on equal terms with other children" (p.1). The children mainly expressed this in terms of inability to stand equal with peers especially during holidays/festivals.

## 5.5. Conclusion

The data that I presented in this chapter shows differences among poor children in terms of the things that they perceived as major risks to their wellbeing. Many of the children who lived in two-parent families found conflict between parents a major source of unhappiness and distress. For those who lived with caregivers who are not biological parents mistreatment and separation from siblings were major concerns. The children in male-absent single parent and two-parent families perceived negative relationship with their mothers as a major source of irritation and to some extent as a risk to their wellbeing, (although this does not mean that, they routinely fought with their mothers). Children in single-parent families and those who lost one or both of their parents talked about inability to fulfil needs, and ill health and death of parents as reasons for unhappiness respectively. Hence, it is fair to conclude that *the type of families the children belong to affected the risks they perceived as most damaging to their wellbeing.*

Gender and age also appear to be important factors of differentiation in relation to one of the four major risks reported by the children, i.e. lack of physical security. The children's accounts suggest that the type and degree of lack of physical security experienced by the children differed according to their gender. That is, in most case, the girls expressed lack of physical security in terms of risks of rape, verbal and physical sexual harassment from older boys and adult men while the boys expressed it in terms of a fear of physical attack from older boys. Compared to the boys, the girls also reported many instances of lack of physical security. A feeling of lack of physical security also seems to differ according to age. The girls' accounts suggest that with age, their feeling of lack of physical security increased and the reverse seems to be true for the boys. Nevertheless, negative relationships with friends/peers and neighbours and fear of a car accident (and in relation to that fear of disability) were viewed as risks by girls and boys in all types of families.

In the children's subjective accounts, risks to their sense of wellbeing were characterized by negative emotions such worry, unhappiness and distress. However, in order to have a *full and differentiated* understanding of the impacts of these risks on the children's sense of wellbeing it is crucial to look at how the children responded to each of these risks. I will deal with the children's ways of coping and coping efficacy in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 6: Poor Children's Perspectives on Ways of Dealing with Risks and Coping Efficacy**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter answers research question 2: “how do the children interviewed in Addis Ababa view their ways of dealing with what they perceived as risks (i.e. their coping strategies), the efficacy of their coping strategies and the relationship between these risks and their impact on their wellbeing? Are the coping strategies, coping efficacy and possible relationships identified in the children's accounts different from those identified in the literature?” Despite an agreement among coping researchers such as Compas (1998) that coping is an essential theoretical concept for a *full* and *differentiated* understanding of the effects of stress on children's health and wellbeing, there has been little consensus on how to conceptualize coping and classify coping responses (as described in chapter 3). Here, my starting point is the conceptualization of coping offered by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). I view coping as the children's intentional physical or mental response to perceived risks. However, I also acknowledge that the children's responses and actions cannot only be viewed as ways of coping with perceived risks. As Pargament (1997) notes, people's activities involve more than coping, and this observation is equally relevant to children's behaviour.

In terms of classification, I refer to ‘families of coping’<sup>19</sup> developed by Skinner et al (2003) whenever the children's ways of dealing with risks fit the authors' categorization. After reviewing two decades of research on coping, the authors developed 13 ‘families of coping’ (for a definition of each of these ‘families of coping’ see chapter 3 pp. 39-40) which they claim “cover much of the range of ways of coping studied thus far” (p. 241). These are:

- |                                     |                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Problem-solving                  | 8. Social withdrawal    |
| 2. Support seeking                  | 9. Emotional regulation |
| 3. Avoidance                        | 10. Information seeking |
| 4. Distraction                      | 11. Negotiation         |
| 5. Positive cognitive restructuring | 12. Opposition and      |
| 6. Rumination                       | 13. Delegation          |
| 7. Helplessness                     |                         |

(From Skinner et al., 2003)

Skinner and colleagues' (2003) classification provides a useful way of talking about the children's responses to perceived risks at a broad level and helps to relate their perspectives and experiences with what has been found in the child-coping literature so far.

Analysis of the children's interview transcripts indicates that not only were there individual differences among the children in terms of coping strategies that they used, but also the same children employed different coping strategies in response to the same risks according to the context in which these arose. Hence, my discussion of their coping strategies will be organized according to the superordinate and sub themes that emerged from their accounts of coping with and responding to what they perceived as risks in the previous chapter. These are:

# **1. Negative relationships:**

## **1.1. Conflict between and with family members**

### **1.1.1. Conflict between parents**

### **1.1.2. Conflict with parents**

### **1.1.3. Conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents**

## **1.2. Conflict with friends and peers**

### **1.2.1. Conflict with friends**

### **1.2.2. Conflict with peers**

## **1.3. Conflict with neighbours**

# **2. Inability to fulfil material needs**

# **3. Lack of physical security**

# **4. Ill health and disability**

Apart from classifying and discussing the children's coping strategies, I examine their coping efficacy as perceived by the children themselves. I pursue this task at two levels. At the first level, I talk about the children's accounts of the effectiveness of their coping strategies. Here, coping efficacy is judged in terms of whether an intended goal was achieved from the child's viewpoint (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). At the second level, I talk about the children's assessments of preferred coping strategies at a general level i.e. their understanding of what constitutes an appropriate coping strategy. I also present schematic diagrams that show possible relations among perceived risks, the children's coping strategies and their sense of wellbeing. The diagrams are used as heuristic devices to present a clearer picture of a complex data set and a complex analysis, without making assumptions about causal pathways within the data that cannot be sustained from the data collected. In the diagrams, solid lines imply directional causal influence between two factors and the arrows are used to denote the presumed direction of any relationship between two factors. For example, I have used solid lines to indicate that the children's coping strategies are produced in response to perceived risks. Dotted and dashed lines indicate possible relationships between two factors. I have used dashed lines to indicate a possible relationship between the children's coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing, and dotted lines to indicate a possible relationship between the outcomes of their coping strategies and the children's sense that these strategies were efficacious.

The chapter has two major sections: section one where I present the children's perspectives on ways of dealing with risks and coping efficacy and section two where I relate their perspectives with what has been found in the child coping literature so far. I make two major points in this chapter. First, there were individual differences among the children in terms of the coping strategies they used. There were also context/situation specific differences as the same children used different coping strategies when similar risks occurred in different contexts. Second, the children's accounts suggest that there may be a relationship between the efficacy of their coping strategies and their sense of wellbeing. That is, when confronted with risks, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts seem to have increased or improved their sense of wellbeing, while those who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts appear to have no improvement in their sense of wellbeing. I have identified increased or improved sense of well-being where the children's accounts refer to experiencing happiness,

satisfaction and a sense of achievement in relation to the outcomes of their coping strategies. I judge that there is no improvement in their sense of wellbeing where children's accounts indicate unhappiness/sadness, worry and distress in relation to the outcomes of their coping strategies. The reversed relationship between the efficacy of the children's coping strategies and their sense of wellbeing may also be true i.e. their sense of wellbeing contributing to their coping efficacy. Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this thesis does not support this relationship.

## **6.2. Strategies to Deal with Negative Relationships**

### **6.2.1. Coping with conflict between and with family members**

#### ***Coping with conflict between parents***

The accounts of the children who experienced frequent conflict between their parents show that when confronted with conflict between their parents, almost all of them employed several ways of coping. The main coping strategies they reported were:

- Going between or reconciling their parents: an example of 'problem-solving'
- Asking the help of their neighbours to settle the problem: an example of 'support-seeking'
- Physically and mentally distancing themselves from the problem: an example of 'escape/avoidance'
- Thinking that nothing bad would happen (wishful thinking): again an example of 'escape/avoidance'

Mamitu lived with her parents, three older siblings and a younger brother. She said when there is conflict between her parents she and her siblings "go between them without asking for the help and intervention of other people" as "now we have all grown up, and our parents have come to acknowledge our roles [as peacemakers]". She and her siblings employed an example of 'problem-solving' coping. Mulatu who lived with his parents and a younger sister described a similar process:

*Beth: What do you do when your parents fight?*

*Mulatu: At home?*

*Beth: Yes.*

*Mulatu: I reconciled them a couple of times.*

*Beth: How did you do that?*

*Mulatu: I go and talk to my mother and father alone and then I bring them together and ask my sister to prepare coffee for them. They will start to talk with each other in the process. Or I will create something which forces them to talk to each other. For instance, I will ask them to buy clothes for me.*

Tsbay also saw her role as involving reconciliation but she did this by seeking the help of influential adults such as their neighbours, which is an example of ‘support seeking’ coping. In describing one such incident to me, she noted:

*Beth: What do you do when your parents fight?*

*Tsbay: ... Last time (I think it was last Saturday) they [my parents] fought. When she [my mother] says ‘I will take my clothes and leave’, I went to [our] neighbour’s house. Then I made them to be reconciled.*

*Beth: How did you do that? Please explain that to me further.*

*Tsbay: I went to the landlord [who lives next door] and told him that Tessema [my father] and my mother are fighting and my mother is saying ‘she is going to leave’. He asked me why and I told him for such and such reasons. Then, he said okay. He comes with [other] people and they [my parents] made peace with each other.*

In talking about the frequent fights between her maternal aunt and stepfather, which is her main worry (chapter 5, page 93), Rahwa, a 12-year-old girl, noted:

*Beth: Tell me about the main worries you currently have.*

*Rahwa: ...When they [my aunt and stepfather] fight with each other I will just step outside, saying to myself ‘why should I bother, he can do whatever he wants to do with her’. They will stop when they both get tired. I go back inside when they are finished with their fighting*

Rahwa tended to disengage herself from the problem, both physically, (“I will just step outside”) and mentally (“why should I bother”), which is an example of ‘escape/avoidance’. Endalk who lived with his parents, four older siblings and a younger sister also emotionally disengaged himself from the problem. When his parents fight, he comforted himself by thinking that nothing bad would happen, (“they would stop [fighting] before it gets worse”) which suggest that he was employing ‘wishful thinking’: an example of ‘escape/avoidance’.

*Beth: What do you do when your parents fight?*

*Endalk: ...because she [my mother] is very patient I say [to myself] they would stop [fighting] before it gets worse.*

However, Endalk's accounts of his parents' relationship elsewhere in the interviews indicate that his parents never stopped fighting "before it gets worse".

In terms of coping efficacy, these children's accounts suggest that going between conflicting parents ('problem-solving') and seeking the intervention of neighbours ('support seeking') were effective ways of coping. Mamitu who said earlier that she and her siblings go between their parents "without asking for the help and intervention of other people" explained why this might be the case:

*..You see, when we [me and my siblings] give advice to our parents [on how they should act or behave towards each other] they would feel ashamed for getting advice from their children and their attitude towards us [the children] as well as towards the family as a whole would improve*

In addition to bringing a good outcome in terms of family relationships (as Mamitu's quote above suggests), going between parents or acting as a peacemaker was viewed as a reason for these children's happiness, sense of achievement and pride. Mulatu, who reconciled his parents "a couple of times", noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your happy memories.*

*Mulatu: The day I was very happy is the day I reconciled my mother and father. After I reconciled them, I received some cents [money] from both of them and I was very happy...*

On another occasion, Mulatu also noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your significant achievements.*

*Mulatu: When I reconciled my mother and father, I felt that I have achieved something...*

Similarly, from Tsbay's facial expression while she talked about how she reconciled her parents by seeking the help of one of their neighbours ("I made them to be reconciled") I got the sense that she was very proud of her achievement. All these examples suggest ways in which effective coping might increase or improve the children's sense of wellbeing, for example, by making them feel happy or proud.

On the other hand, the accounts of the children who stepped outside and thought that nothing bad would happen (examples of 'escape/avoidance') suggest that these ways of coping were ineffective. That is, although the objective of the children who used these

strategies was avoiding worry (by either physically or mentally distancing themselves from the problem), in practice they were not able to do that. For example, the account of Rahwa who said earlier that when her maternal aunt and step father fight with each other she just stepped outside saying “why should I bother, he can do whatever he wants to do with her” indicates that it was actually difficult for her not to worry about her aunt’s physical safety. When I asked her to tell me about her main worries, she said she gets “very worried” that her stepfather may hit her aunt “in bad places” (p. 91). The account of Endalk who comforted himself by thinking that nothing bad would happen (‘wishful thinking’) also indicates that he did not always succeed in thinking that nothing bad would happen. For example, when I asked him to tell me about his most difficult challenge he said he worries that when his mother “loses all her patience” she will go to his father’s bed and strangle him (p. 91). Since the children continued to worry about the outcome of their parents’ behaviour, my assumption was that their sense of wellbeing has not improved.

In order to get a sense of whether children viewed particular coping strategies as appropriate, I also asked the children (particularly those who said conflict between parents is a difficult thing for children of their age) what they thought children should do when faced with conflict between their parents. My hypothesis was that children who behaved in a way that they felt was appropriate would have a greater sense of wellbeing compared to those who did not, even if their strategy was ultimately unsuccessful. Reconciling parents either by acting as a peacemaker or by seeking the help of neighbours was the most common response. Endalk, for example, noted:

*Beth: What do you think a child should do when his parents fight?*

*Endalk: He and his siblings should be able to solve the problem through mediators and the parents should be able to learn from their mistakes and do not fight again...*

It is interesting to note that although in practice Endalk mentally distanced himself from the problem, his preferred way of responding to conflict between parents was seeking the assistance of others.

Esub, a 14-year-old girl, who lived in a two-parent family also said:

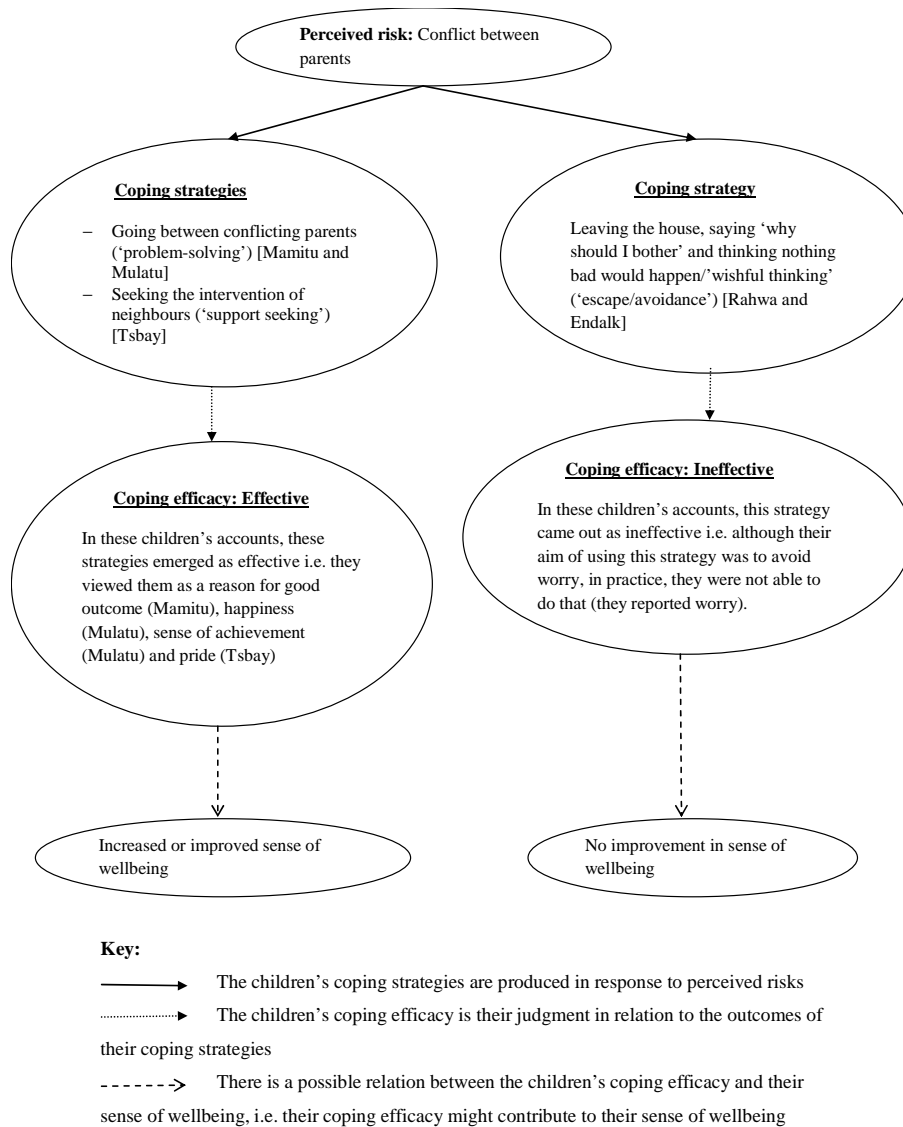
*Beth: When there is conflict between parents, what do you think children should do?*

*Esub: They should try to make peace between them. By approaching both of them [their parents], the children should be able to convince either of them to say okay and solve their problems. If their parents do not make peace with each other, the children*

*should be able to learn from this experience. They should say to themselves tomorrow when we grow up we should not behave like our parents. They should not spend their time in undesirable places just because their parents quarrel with each other.*

For Esub going between parents was a preferred and desirable coping strategy. Even when the outcome is unsuccessful (i.e. when parents do not make peace with each other), she argued that children should try to learn from the experience and not feel that they were justified in spending their time ‘in undesirable places’.

Figure 12: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (conflict between parents), the children’s coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing





### *Coping with conflict with parents*

In response to conflict with their parents, the children reported that they employed five coping strategies:

- Seeking advice, comfort and instrumental help from the other parent, friends and neighbours: an example of ‘support-seeking’
- Being patient or controlling their emotion: an example of ‘emotional regulation’
- Distancing themselves from the parent/s: an example of ‘escape/avoidance’
- Running away from home to express anger: an example of ‘opposition’ and,
- Reporting constant worry without any attempt to deal with the problem: an example of ‘Rumination’

However, often the same children reported using more than one of these strategies at different times and even concurrently. For example, Endalk who told me earlier that his alcoholic father makes him cry “every night” first responded by physically distancing himself from his father: an example of ‘escape/avoidance’. He said, “at one time I started to spend the night outside [my home]”:

*Beth: Where outside?*

*Endalk: At my uncle’s house: the one who died last time. There, I just slept on the floor by spreading some clothes. The house I slept there is a store because there was no other space for me. I found that very uncomfortable and I had to get back here. Now, I sleep here trying to take his behaviour patiently.*

When he could not physically distance himself from his father (because there was no proper sleeping space for him at his uncle’s place), Endalk said, “Now I sleep here trying to patiently take his [my father’s] behaviour” which suggests that he was trying to control his emotions: an example of ‘emotional regulation’. In another context, Endalk again reported using more than one of these strategies. At one time, after quarrelling with his mother and older sister he ran away from home to express his anger at his mother and older sister, which is an example of ‘opposition’. He ran away from home because, he said, his older sister told him not to go to one of his neighbours’ house and:

*She threatens me. She said ‘if I see you going to that house [neighbour’s house] again I will break your leg’ [...] Instead of having a broken leg because I will not stop going to that house I said [to myself] it is better to run off. I was also very angry with my mother that day. When I asked her to give me breakfast, she bought bread for*

*them [my siblings], and she told me to eat Injera. I never eat Injera for breakfast [...] I wrote a letter and told her [my younger sister] to give it to Addis [one of our neighbours] so that she can give it to my mother and I run away....*

Endalk said, after walking a long distance in the sun with an empty stomach, towards the end of the day he becomes tired and decides to call one of his neighbours (Addis): an example of ‘support seeking’. He said Addis persuaded him to come to her house, gave him food and reconciled him with his mother and older sister. Therefore, when running away from home did not work Endalk shifted his response to seeking the assistance of one of his neighbours. It appears that Endalk runs away from home to express his anger at his mother and older sister rather than to distance himself from the problem (because if the latter was the case he could have simply stayed at his neighbour’s house).

Mulatu, a 13-year-old boy, also noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in relation to depression. Do you get depressed?*  
*Mulatu: ... If I quarrel with my mother, I will go to my father. If I quarrel with my father, I will remain here [at home with my mother]. Often, I do not quarrel with him since most of the time he is not here. If I quarrel with her, I will tell him. He tells me to be patient...*

Here, in response to conflict with his mother Mulatu sought advice from his father, which is an example of ‘support seeking’. And he went on to say:

*... When I quarrel with my mother, I often remain calm hoping that she will cool down. When she cools down, she has a good character; she gives me good advice. So when I quarrel with her I prefer to remain calm even when she insults me or gets angry with me.*

Perhaps taking into account his father’s advice, Mulatu said he remains calm when he quarrels with his mother: an example of ‘emotional regulation’. In another quote (see chapter 7, page 179), Mulatu said that when he quarrels with both of his parents, he goes to his friends because “they [my friends] help me to cool down” which is again an example of ‘support seeking’. When confronted with conflict with their parents, some of the children (for example Eleni) reported worrying without any active attempt to deal with it: an example of ‘rumination’.

Hence, in the context of conflict with their parents, not only were there individual differences among the children in terms of coping strategies that they used but also some children reported that they employed more than one coping strategies at different times and even simultaneously depending on the demands of their situation. Endalk's account suggests that his approach was 'if this strategy does not work (e.g. sleeping at my uncle's place: 'escape/avoidance'), then I will try that one (e.g. patiently enduring my father's behaviour: 'emotional regulation')'. Mulatu also employed more than one coping strategy but, unlike Endalk, he seems to have the ability to match his coping strategies to the demands of his situation.

With regard to coping efficacy, these children's accounts suggest that 'support seeking' and 'emotional regulation' were effective. With regard to 'support seeking', Endalk, for example, noted that after he realized that he could not run away from his home for a long period of time, he benefited from the intervention of one of his neighbours who reconciled him with his mother and older sister. Mulatu's account indicates that in the context of conflict with his mother, the advice he got from his father helped him to be patient. He also said when he was confronted with conflict with both of his parents the emotional support he got from his friends helped him to "cool down". Pertaining to 'emotional regulation', Mulatu noted that when he quarrels with his mother he prefers to remain calm because "when she [my mother] cools down she has a good character; she gives me good advice" which suggest that because he remains calm this helped his mother to cool down and have a good relationship with him. After he realized that he cannot physically distance himself from his father for long, Endalk also noted, "now I sleep here trying to patiently take his [my father's] behaviour" suggesting that he was convinced that being patient will work out better than physically distancing himself from his father.

On the other hand, in the children's accounts, the strategies of 'escape/avoidance' and 'opposition' emerged as unsuccessful. The account of Endalk (who used these strategies in response to conflict with his father and with his mother and older sister respectively) suggests that he was not able to pursue them for long. He said he could not distance himself from his alcoholic father for long because he could not find a proper sleeping space at his uncle's place and he could not run away from his home for a long period because he felt tired and hungry. However, his flexibility in his use of coping strategies appeared to help him in dealing with his situation. When he could not distance himself from his father, he

tried to control his emotion. When he realized that he could not stay away from his home for a long period, he sought the assistance of one of his neighbours.

In the context of conflict with parents, ‘apologizing’ which basically means admitting one’s mistake and making peace (an example of ‘problem-solving’) and being patient or controlling emotion (an example of ‘emotional regulation’) emerged as many of the children’s preferred ways of coping. In response to my question about what it means to him when bad things happen to a child of his age Mulatu, for example, replied, “When he does not get along with his family” and said:

*Beth: What do you think this child should do?*

*Mulatu: He has to make peace with his family. If he is the one who is wrong, he has to apologize and make peace with them. If they are the one who are wrong he has to be patient and wait until they understand him. He should take time and try to explain to them.*

According to Mulatu, if the cause of disagreement is the child he should admit his mistake and make peace with his family: an example of ‘problem-solving’. However, if the cause of disagreement is his family he should be patient: an example of ‘emotional regulation’. In the quote below, Endalk who did not manage to control his emotion when he quarrelled with his mother and older sister also expressed the importance of controlling emotion or patience for making his mother happy and thus enabling him to have a good relationship with her:

*Beth: what are the things you want to see changed in your life?*

*Endalk: I am bad tempered. I get angry quickly. I want to change this character of mine. I want to be calm even when they [family members] quarrel with me or punish me physically. My mother, for instance, has high blood pressure. I do not want to make her angry. I want her to be happy. Every day I want to meet her demands. So it would be good if I could abandon my character which makes my mother angry [getting angry quickly] and replace it with the one which makes her happy [remaining calm/patient].*

Many of the children also emphasised the importance of patience generally in the context of conflict with other people. What is more, when I asked the children to tell me about their behaviour<sup>20</sup> almost all of them responded by describing to me whether they are patient or not. I think this shows that patience was the most important aspect of how the children expected themselves to behave which is a reflection of how the society expected them to

behave. As indicated in Chapter 5, Ethiopian society very generally speaking disapproves of the open expression of emotions such as anger, and remaining calm (patience) is very much appreciated. For example, the advice Mulatu's father gave to Mulatu when he quarrelled with his mother was to be patient (he received similar advice from his friends when he quarrelled with his parents) (p.180). In addition, the following quote shows how his family disapproves of the open expression of anger:

*Beth: Are there aspects of your behaviour that worries other people such as your parents?*

*Mulatu: No, there isn't much [that worries them] except sometimes, as I said before, when I come home very angry after fighting with my friends. [Most of the time] they say I have a good character. They say nobody has as good character as mine. They tell me to continue [behaving like this]. [But] when I come home angry they tell me not to behave like that.*

In their definition of a "good child", some of the children even included "a child who does not get angry quickly".

### ***Coping with conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents***

The nature of conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents was different from conflict with parents mainly because the former often involved mistreatment (such as beatings, verbal threat, heavy or unequal workload, being deprived of material and emotional support) of the children at the hands of their caregivers. When confronted with mistreatment, many of the children reported worry and fear without any active attempt to deal with the situation they found themselves in: an example of 'rumination'. Bereket who said, "I live in constant worry and fear [because] Bedilu [my caregiver] always beats me for reasons that I do not know" (chapter 5, page 100), for example, also noted:

*Bereket: ...When I see Bedilu [my caregiver] I always bend my neck [sign of fear]....*

*Beth: Why do you bend your neck when you see Bedilu?*

*Bereket: I bend my neck because he hits me.*

Senayte who said "I always worry that he [my caregiver] might hit me in the evening when he comes home from work" and he does not allow me to go outside home (chapter 5, page 100) also noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in terms of obedience.*

*Senayte: I am always obedient but when I get tired, I cry. I cannot say no to them [caregiver's family] so I express my tiredness by crying.*

However, some of them, specifically Hezera, attempted to actively deal with the experience of mistreatment by seeing his life in a positive light. For example, when I asked him to tell me about the resources children of his age need to grow up well, Hezera explained the importance of ability to fulfil basic needs (such as food), ability to play, study and get family supervision, and said the following about his situation:

*Beth: Are you able to get (or do you have) the things you have just mentioned to me?*

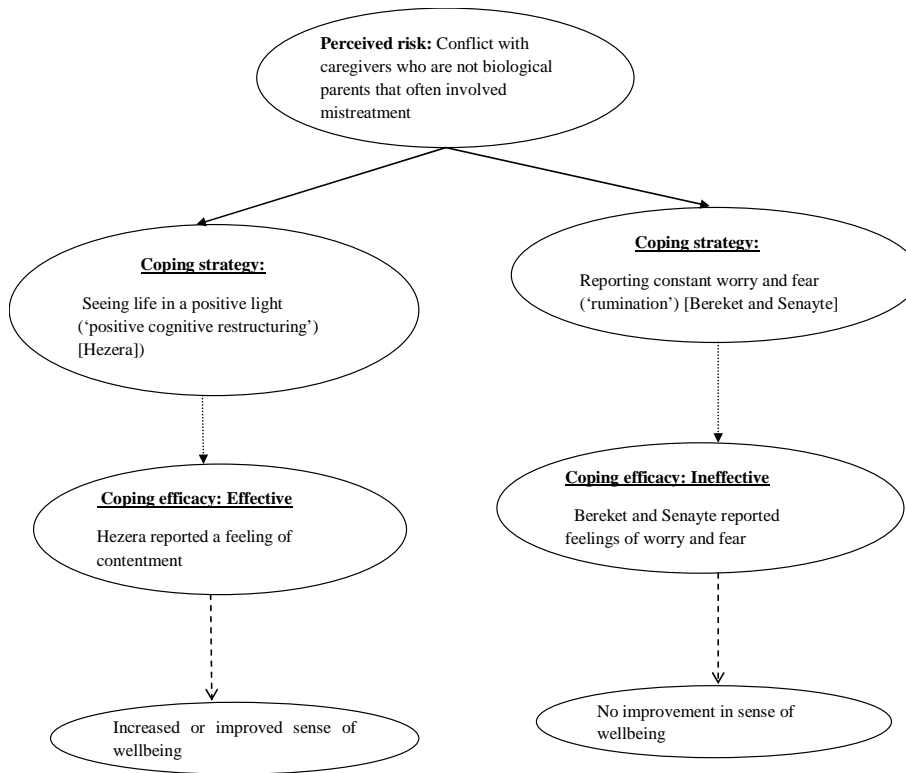
*Hezera: No, I do not have! [However] whatever constraints I face, I thank my God for my condition. There are those who are in a worse situation. There are many who live in very bad condition. For instance, not far from here- in fact very close to our house- many children spend the night on the street. [In contrast to them] I say I am in good condition*

Hezera attempted to deal with lack of emotional and material support from his caregiver by comparing his situation with those he saw as worse off (i.e. “children who spend the night on the street”) which is an example of ‘positive cognitive restructuring’. Like Bereket and Senayte, Hezera experienced mistreatment at the hands of his caregivers, which included physical violence (chapter 5 page 100), being denied time for play and being forced to do tasks which are beyond his capacity. However, what was different about Hezera (when compared with Bereket and Senayte) is that he got consistent emotional and material support from his older sister and neighbours, and he had an excellent relationship with his friends and peers (I will pick up this point in the following chapter).

With regard to coping efficacy, these children’s accounts suggest that seeing one’s situation in a positive light (‘positive cognitive restructuring’) was an effective way of coping while reporting worry and fear without any attempt to deal with the situation (‘rumination’) was ineffective. That is, Bereket and Senayte who reported using passive ways of coping (worrying) with experiences of mistreatment were overwhelmed by their situation (i.e. they said they live in constant worry and fear). Whereas, Hezera who reported using more active way of coping (seeing his situation in a positive light) said he is content with his situation (“I thank my God for the situation I am in”). This means, Hezera who used effective coping strategy reported a feeling of contentment, which suggests that his sense of wellbeing has improved, while Bereket and Senayte who used ineffective coping

strategy reported feelings of worry and fear, which suggest that their sense of wellbeing has not improved.

Figure 13: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents), the children's coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing



### 6.2.2. Coping with conflict with friends and peers

#### *Coping with conflict with friends*

When confronted with conflict with their friends, the children reported that they employed four coping strategies:

- Resolving the conflict by themselves: an example of 'problem-solving'
- Seeking the intervention of parents, older siblings, neighbours and other friends: an example of 'support seeking'
- Controlling their emotion such as not getting angry and sulky: an example of 'emotional regulation'
- Staying away from these friends or ignoring them: an example of 'social withdrawal'

Nevertheless, many of them used a mixture of these strategies depending on the context. For instance, the discussion I had with them regarding their relationships with each of their friends indicates that if the reasons for conflict were minor (such as refusing to admit defeat while playing), many of them would often resolve the conflict by themselves quickly, which is an example of ‘problem-solving’ (as indicated in figure 14 A on page 144).

However, if the reasons for fights were viewed as major (such as failing or declining to be there for each other, and betrayal of a secret), it appears that the children would use one of the other three coping strategies (i.e. ‘support seeking’, ‘emotional regulation’ and ‘social withdrawal’). Their choice of coping strategies appeared to depend on three factors: their personal characteristics, the type of relationship their family have with that of their friends’ family and the type of relationship they have with sources of support such as friends, parents and neighbours (as indicated in figure 14 B on page 145).

In terms of personal characteristics, those who reported patience or the capacity to control their emotions used strategies of ‘problem-solving’, ‘support seeking’ and ‘emotional regulation’, while those who said that they are easy to anger employed an example of ‘social withdrawal’. Mulatu, for example, noted:

*Beth: Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned to me in relation to the things children of your age need to flourish?*

*Mulatu: ...In relation to my friends, I have a good character. Even when we fight, I take the initiative to talk to them. I do not get sulky... Because I have a good character, I play with them. Often they do not fight with me. [Actually,]I reconcile them when they fight with each other...*

Mulatu was saying because I have a good character (which he, on another occasion, described as being patient or the ability to control emotion) when I fight with my friends “I do not get sulky” (an example of ‘emotional regulation’) and actually I take the initiative to talk to them (an example of ‘problem-solving’). Conversely, Bereket who described his behaviour, as “I get angry quickly” told me when I met him at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork that his friends refused to speak to him for reasons he did not know:

*Beth: Ok, tell me about your disagreement with your friends*

*Bereket: When they ignored me, I also ignored them. Then at their convenience, they wanted to make peace with me. Abraham [one of my friends] told his sister to intervene. I said no [saying] ‘why did they ignore me in the first place’. I was angry with them. We are still not talking to each other....*



Partly due to his temperament, Bereket resented the fact that his friends wanted to make peace with him “at their convenience” and preferred to stay away from them or “ignore them”, despite the intervention of one of his friends’ older sister which is an example of ‘social withdrawal’.

The type of relationship that existed between the children’s families and their friends’ families also affected their coping strategies. The children whose families had a good relationship with their friends’ families used an example of ‘support seeking’, whereas those whose families had a bad relationship with their friend’s families employed an example of ‘social withdrawal’. For example, the caregiver of Tsbay’s friend was a very close friend of her mother. When I quarrel with my friend (Tirualme), Tsbay said:

*Beth: What is difficult regarding your friends?*

*Tsbay: ...my mother asks me ‘where is Tirualme today?’ ‘Why are you not together today?’ [...] she sends Hiwot [my older sister] to Tirualme’s house. And when she [my sister] asks [Tirualem] why she is not coming to our house Tirualme says ‘I quarrelled with Tsbay; she has done such and such things to me; she refuses to speak to me and so on’ and then my mother tells her to come to our house and then she reconciled us.*

Tsbay’s quote above suggests that her mother influenced her response to conflict with her friend (Tirualem). Maybe because her mother did not want to spoil her relationship with the caregiver of Tsbay’s friend she intervened to make peace between Tsbay and her friend. In a way, she forced Tsbay to rely on her intervention to make peace with her friend, although Tsbay might not want to make peace with her friend in the first place. On the other hand, at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork, Habtu, a 14-year-old boy, quarrelled with one of his best friends in the neighbourhood. The conflict was part of a dispute between his family and his friends’ family over a fence. Habtu told me that even if he wanted to make peace with his best friend, his family members told him to stay away from his friend. So, Tsbay relied on her mother’s intervention to make peace with her friend, which is an example of ‘support seeking’, and Habtu was told to stay away from his friend: an example of ‘social withdrawal’.

When we come to the third factor which is the type of relationship the children had with sources of support such as friends, parents and neighbours, their accounts indicate that those who had bad relationships with these people employed strategy of ‘social

withdrawal', while those who had good relationships with these people used strategy of 'support seeking'. In the discussion I had with him concerning his relationship with each of his friends, Melese who told me that he is happy about his relationships with his friends, for example, noted:

*Beth: Have you ever quarrelled with Tamerat?*

*Melese: Yes, I quarrelled with him a couple of times.*

*Beth: What were the reasons?*

*Melese: for example, last time we quarrelled because when I asked him to give me money he refused. However, when I have money and if he asks me [for money] I always give him.*

*Beth: What did you do about the conflict?*

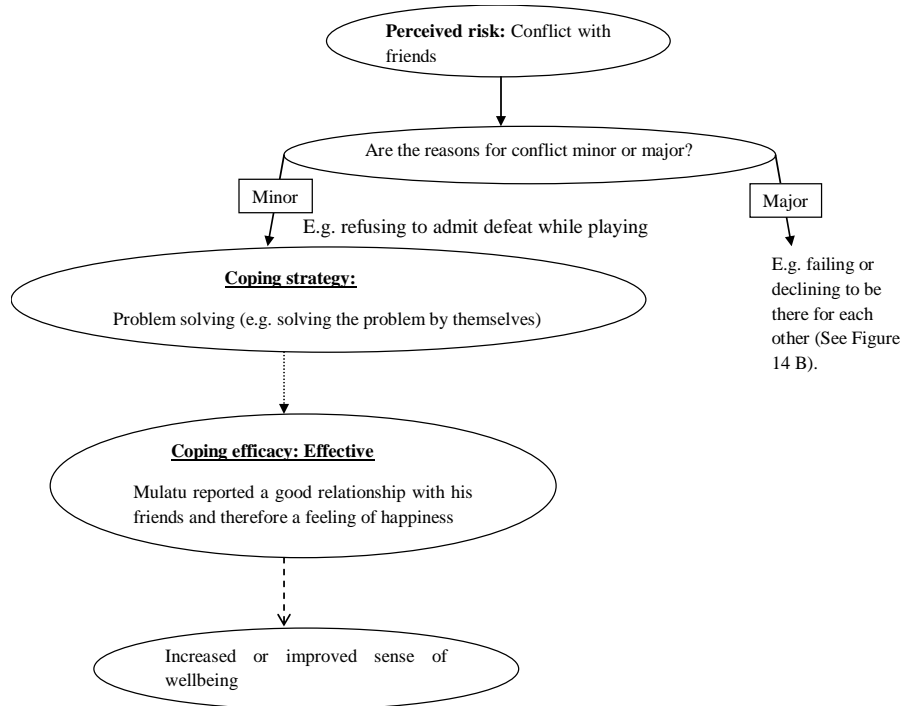
*Melese: for two days, we were not talking to each other. Then, Bizuayehu [my other friend] reconciled us.*

The fact that Melese had good relationships with his friends means that he was able to seek their intervention whenever he quarrelled with one of them.

In terms of coping efficacy, the children's accounts suggest that talking to friends (problem-solving), seeking the intervention of other friends ('support seeking') and patience or controlling emotion ('emotional regulation') were effective coping strategies. Compare for example the experiences of Mulatu who said "I have a good character, even when we [my friends and I] fight I take the initiative to talk to them. I do not get sulky", and Bereket who described how "When they [my friends] ignored me I also ignored them" (an example of 'social withdrawal'). Bereket went on to say "but now I regret. When they go to church, I cannot go with them; when they play, I cannot play with them. And that make me sad". We can infer that Mulatu who employed effective coping had a better sense of wellbeing than Bereket as he was able to play with his friends, while Bereket who used ineffective coping said that he was not able to play with his friends and this makes him sad. As I will discuss in the following chapter, being able to play with friends is one of the factors that positively affected the children's sense of wellbeing.

Figure 14: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (conflict with friends), the children's coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing

#### A. Conflict with friends because of minor reasons



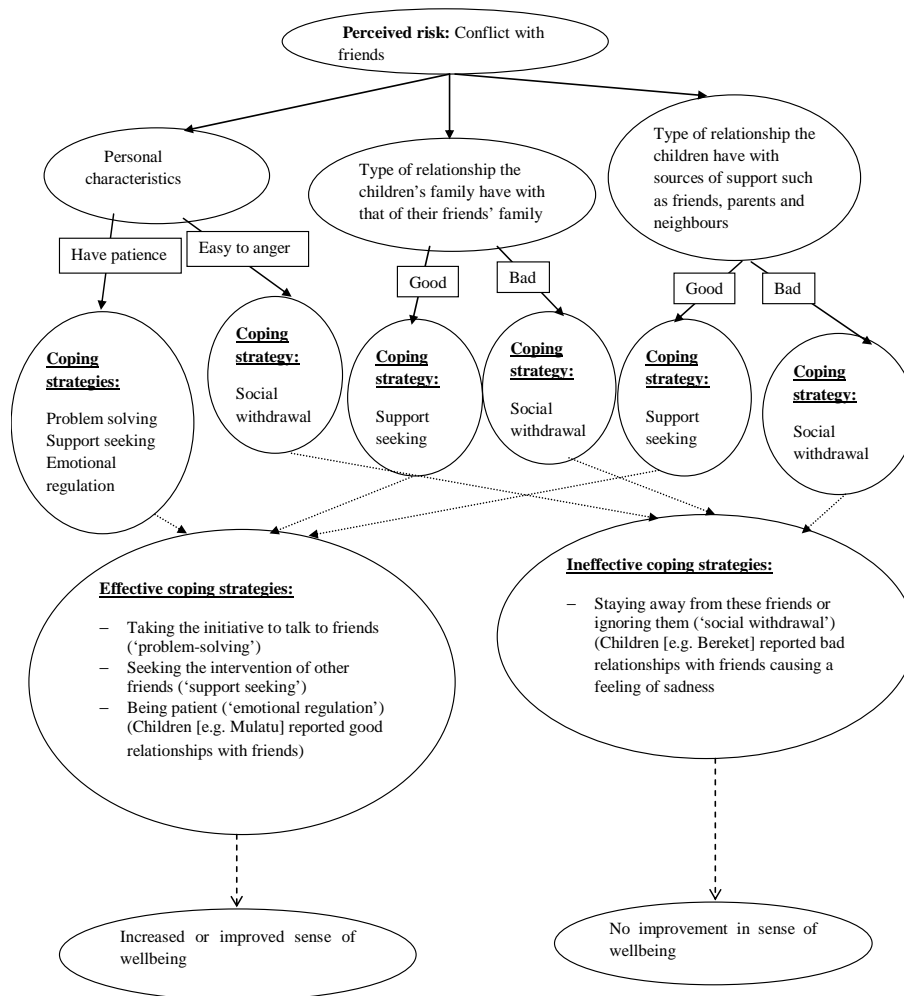
When confronted with conflict with friends, seeking the support of others ('support seeking'), 'apologizing' meaning admitting a mistake and making peace ('problem-solving') and not getting angry quickly or being patient ('emotional regulation') were also many of the children's preferred coping strategies. Mulatu, for example, noted:

*Beth: What do you think a child who quarrels with his friend should do?*

*Mulatu: He has to tell his other friends to intervene. But he should not apologize if he does not do something wrong. He should explain the problem to his other friends and ask them to intervene*

Mulatu emphasises the significance of seeking other friends' intervention when a child quarrels with one of his friends. He also stated the inappropriateness of 'apologizing' in the context of a fight where the child is not the cause of disagreement.

## B. Conflict with friends because of major reasons



In response to my question about what it means to him when bad things happen to a child of his age Bereket said “if he does not get along with his neighbours and friends he will be lonely and he will face a problem” and also noted:

*Beth: What does this child should do, I mean a child who faces such kind of difficulty?*

*Bereket: He should ask for apology from these people and try to get along with them.*

Interestingly, although in response to conflict with his friends Bereket was not willing to accept his friends’ apology and preferred to ignore them (‘social withdrawal’), his preferred way of coping was ‘apologizing’ (‘problem solving’). This means the children who used

coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts were aware of and viewed as preferable alternative strategies that were used by other children and emerged as effective in their accounts. The factor that was most likely to be preventing them from using such strategies was related to the lack of relevant protective factors (I will pick up this point in the following chapter).

In the discussion that I had with the children regarding what they like about each of their friends, the quality of ‘not getting angry quickly during fights’ (‘emotional regulation’) also emerged in many of the children’s accounts.

### ***Coping with conflict with peers***

In dealing with conflict with their peers (“children/friends in the neighbourhood”), which involved teasing and exclusion, the children reported that they employed a variety of coping strategies. In terms of teasing, they reported using four coping strategies:

- Calmly telling the teaser to stop: an example of ‘problem-solving’
- Getting into fight: an example of ‘opposition’
- Not taking teasing seriously: an example of ‘positive cognitive restructuring’ and,
- Remaining quiet: an example of ‘helplessness’

The first thing that came out of the children’s accounts is that there were individual differences among them in terms of dealing with teasing. When teased by children in his neighbourhood, Mulatu, for example, said he tells them to stop which is an example of ‘problem solving’:

*Mulatu: ...I do not fight with them for this reason. For instance, last Saturday I was playing with one of my friends. He kept on teasing me repeatedly but I did not say anything except asking him to stop. Finally, he came to apologize*

When teased by children in his neighbourhood, Bereket said because he becomes angry he gets into a fight with them, which is an example of ‘opposition’:

*Bereket: ...I get angry quickly. I do not like jokes and romping. When they suddenly press me or push me from the back, I get frustrated. I also do not like their teasing. When they say bad things about my mother, I get into a fight with them*

Unlike Bereket, Hezera said he does not get angry when he is teased. Rather, he tries to conceptualize the experience of teasing in a positive way by considering it as a joke which is an example of “positive cognitive restructuring”:

*Hezera: There are times that my friends [in the neighbourhood] tease me but I do not get angry for this reason. Since we make fun of each other often and since I know that there are children who insult you through jokes, I do not take it seriously. We also teased other children together. We make fun of other children through jokes....*

Belete said when children tease him in his neighbourhood he “just keeps quiet” which is an example of ‘helplessness’:

*Belete: When they [children in the neighbourhood] insult me and tease me while we are playing I get very irritated. Since I do not know how to tease them or insult them back I just keep quite but I get very irritated....*

In terms of exclusion, many of the children reported worry and distress without any active attempt to deal with it, which is an example of ‘rumination’. It appears that for many of the children exclusion from their peer group was an overwhelming experience. Endalk, for example, said when the children in his neighbourhood refuse to let him in while they play football he “gets extremely distressed” (chapter 5, page 105). In addition, some of the children said because they feel angry when they are excluded, they isolate themselves from their peer group, which is an example of ‘social withdrawal/ self-isolation’:

*Beth: Do you get depressed?*

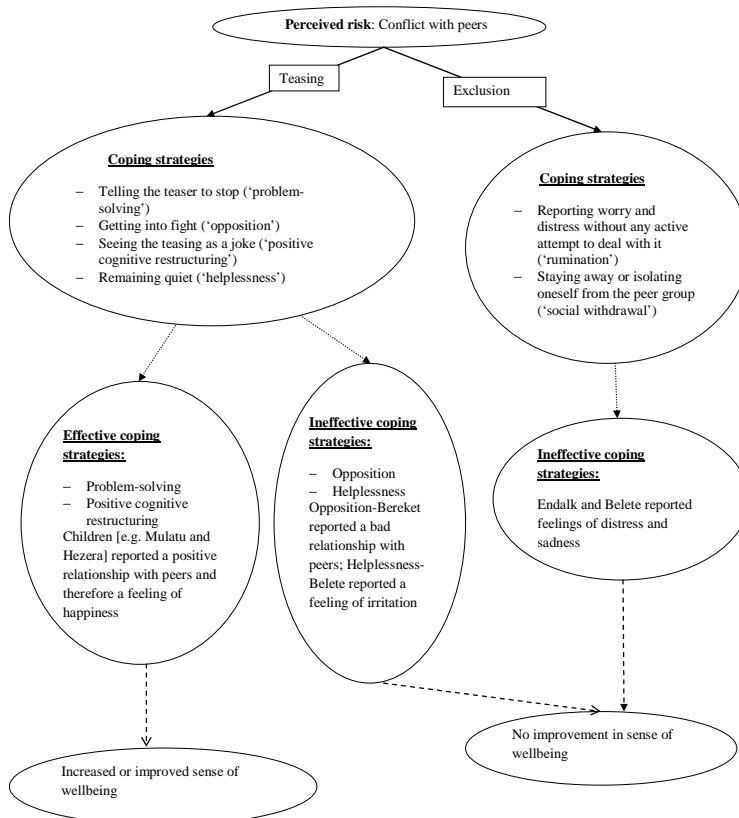
*Belete: ...when they [children in the neighbourhood] do not allow me to play with them, [...] I get angry. When I get angry, I do not want to play with them even after they changed their mind and allow me to play with them. Then I get depressed.*

In terms of coping efficacy, in the context of teasing, telling the perpetrators to stop (an example of ‘problem-solving’) and conceptualizing the experience in a positive way (an example of ‘positive cognitive restructuring’) emerged as effective. Mulatu who said that when his friend repeatedly teases him he told him to stop, for instance, noted, “Finally he came to apologize”. Hezera who perceived the experience of teasing in a positive way by considering it as a joke went on to say:

*...my friends [in the neighbourhood] listen to what I say and I do the same so we love each other like sisters and brothers...*

On the other hand, in the children's accounts, getting into fight (an example of 'opposition'), and remaining quiet (an example of 'helplessness') emerged as ineffective. Belete who said that he remains quiet when he is teased, for example, noted, "But I get very irritated". Bereket who said he gets into fight in another interview noted his friends in the neighbourhood do not want to play with him. Hence, Mulatu and Hezera who used effective ways of coping might have increased or improved sense of wellbeing as they reported a good relationship with peers (the positive influence good relationship with peers has on children's sense of wellbeing is discussed in the next chapter). Whereas, Belete and Bereket who used ineffective ways of coping might have no improvement in their sense of wellbeing as they reported a bad relationship with peers and a feeling of irritation respectively.

Figure 15: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (conflict with peers), the children's coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing



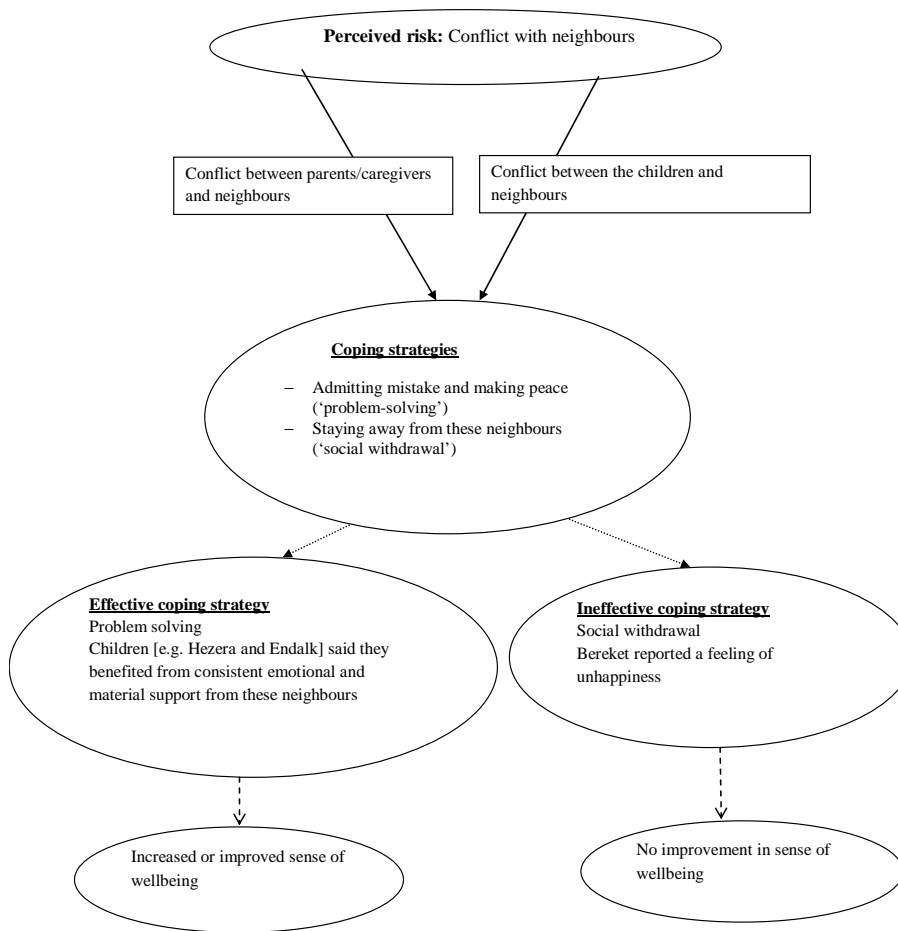
### **6.2.3. Coping with conflict with neighbours**

As described in chapter 5, conflict with neighbours occurred in two ways: when the children or when their parents/caregivers quarrelled with neighbours. In the context of conflict between their parents/caregivers and neighbours the children reported that they were often powerless to deal with their situation. That is, their parents/caregivers rather than them decided how they should behave and act. Many of them said after a fight between their parents/caregivers and neighbours they stopped interacting with these neighbours because their parents/caregivers told them to do so or they just felt that avoiding these neighbours was the right thing to do: an example of ‘social withdrawal’. However, some children (such as Endalk and Hezera) continued to interact with their neighbours despite the disapproval of their parents/caregivers. In the context of conflict between them and their neighbours (which often happened because of their disobedience), the children often responded by apologizing and making peace with their neighbours, an example of ‘problem-solving’. Nevertheless, some children (such as Amare and Abebe) stayed away from these neighbours and interacted with their other neighbours which is again an example of ‘social withdrawal’.

In the children’s accounts, apologizing and making peace or continuing to interact with neighbours despite parents/caregivers disapproval (‘problem-solving’) emerged as an effective coping strategy, reflecting the importance of neighbours as a social resource. For example, Hezera and Endalk who continued to interact with their neighbours despite their parents’ disapproval said they benefited from consistent emotional and material support from these neighbours. On the other hand, Bereket who stayed away from his neighbours after they quarrelled with his caregiver (see chapter 5) reported a feeling of unhappiness. Therefore, it can be said that Hezera and Endalk who used effective coping might have an improved sense of wellbeing as they benefited from consistent emotional and material support from their neighbours, while Bereket who used ineffective coping might have no improvement in his sense of wellbeing as he reported a feeling of unhappiness. Here it is important to mention that an improved sense of wellbeing for Hezera and Endalk does not directly come from their responses rather I inferred it from other parts of the thesis where consistent emotional and material support from neighbours are shown to improve their sense of wellbeing.



Figure 16: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (conflict with neighbours), the children's coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing



### 6.3. Strategies to Deal with Inability to Fulfil Material Needs

In response to material disadvantage, the children reported that they employed a number of coping strategies, which included:

- Getting emotional and material support from friends, neighbours, teachers and relatives: an example of 'support seeking'
- Doing part-time jobs during school vacation and saving money which they were given by parents and neighbours (e.g. during holidays): an example of 'problem-solving'
- Trying to understand their parents' financial condition and as a result reducing their demands/wishes: an example of 'negotiation'
- Not thinking about poverty: an example of 'escape/avoidance'

- Seeing their situation in a positive light: an example of ‘positive cognitive restructuring’
- Crying: an example of ‘helplessness’
- Reporting worry: an example of ‘rumination’

What is interesting is that many of the children used more than one of these strategies at different times and even concurrently and, therefore, it is difficult to associate a certain coping strategy with a certain child. This might be because this risk is a varied and complex one that could be reflected in many different ways and it could take different forms (such as not having enough food at home and being unable to go to a school trip). For example, Habtu who was distressed by his inability to fulfil his material needs said:

*Beth: Tell me about your past greatest problems.*

*Habtu: ... [I tell myself that] my family’s problem is not my concern. [I say] I should not bother about my family’s problems. Or whether or not there is enough food at home. I mean if I worry about whether or not there is lunch at home while I am at school I will stop following my lessons and just think about food. Therefore, it is better not to think about it at all. If there is food, at home I will eat and if there is not I will not....*

Habtu dealt with his material disadvantage by cognitively distancing himself from the problem–“[I tell myself that] my family’s problem is not my concern” (‘escape/avoidance’). However, trying not to bother about his “family’s problem” was not the only strategy that Habtu used, he also noted:

*...I get along with my teachers very well. If I get hungry, I would go to them and ask for food. Once I came to school without eating my breakfast and lunch. I had a stomach pain. Then I went to the teachers’ [office] and asked them to give me money. Since they know about my problem, they went with me to a cafeteria....*

In the above quote, Habtu sought material support from his teachers (‘support seeking’). His quote below shows that sometimes it was difficult for him not to bother about his material disadvantage or seek the support of other people (such as his teachers). Sometimes he became overwhelmed by his poverty and felt helpless. He and five of his siblings depended on food, which their mother brought home from a soldiers’ camp (where she worked in food preparation), for their survival. Habtu noted:

*[One day,] her boss told her [my mother] not to take food home anymore. That day I was very hungry. I did not eat my lunch hoping that she will bring something to eat. Often she comes home at 3 pm but that day she came home at 5 pm. When I asked her the reason, she said she had to fetch water from far away. Before she came home, I was very hungry and I went outside and cried. One of our neighbours saw me crying and she took me to her house and gave me food.*

Here, Habtu became overwhelmed by his material poverty. He said because he was very hungry he went outside his home and cried ('helplessness'). However, the fact that he cried by going outside his home (rather than crying inside his home) can be interpreted as seeking support from his neighbours ('support seeking'). During my second phase of fieldwork, Habtu also started to do a part-time job ('problem-solving'). After school hours, he told me that he sell *Ambasha* (homemade bread) to support himself and his family. From Habtu's accounts, it is clear that in different contexts he used a number of strategies to deal with his inability to fulfil his material needs.

Another such example was Dino who lived with his mother and a younger sister. Like Habtu, inability to fulfil his material needs was a reason for his unhappiness. For example, when I asked him to tell me about his past unhappy memories he talked about the day he was not able to go to a school trip with his classmates because he could not afford to (chapter 5 page 112) and then said:

*... [However] at another point others and I who were [similarly] unable to go [to the school trip] approached our teacher to organize a [little] trip for us, we contributed 5 birr each and hired a taxi to take us to museums. That day I was very happy*

Dino sought instrumental support from his teacher in response to his inability to fulfil his material needs ('support seeking'). When I asked him whether he is able to get the resources he mentioned to me in relation to my question about what children of his age need to flourish, he also noted:

*Beth: Are you able to get the resources you have just mentioned to me?*

*Dino: No. [However] since there are many poor people in this area I do not think about what I do not have.*

The above quote suggests that Dino was trying to see his situation in a positive light ('positive cognitive restructuring'). He was saying I am not the only one who is poor in this

neighbourhood so I do not worry about what I do not have. He also did part-time jobs (shoe shining and carrying goods) to support him-self and his family ('problem-solving').

In response to my question about the resources children of his age need to be happy with their lives, Nuru who lived with four of his siblings and his mother emphasised the importance of a house, clothing and food, and said the following about his condition:

*Beth: Are you able to get the resources you have just mentioned to me?*

*Nuru: Since I know that, my mother does not have money I do not ask her to buy for me cloth or shoes. I am not close to my father so I do not have the courage to ask him either. Our uncle, my father's brother, buys cloth for us [my siblings and me] for holidays. If he forgets to buy, we will remind him but if he does not have money, we will wash and wear what we just have. Sometimes our neighbours give us shoes if the shoes we have are worn out.*

Nuru used a combination of two coping strategies to deal with his material poverty. First, he attempted to understand his mother's financial condition and restrict his demands ('negotiation'). Second, he sought material assistance from his maternal uncle and neighbours ('support seeking').

Another interesting point is that the children who did not talk about their inability to fulfil their material needs as a reason for their unhappiness conceptualized their material disadvantage either in a positive way ('positive cognitive restructuring') or by trying to understand their parents' financial condition and as a result restrict their demands/wishes ('negotiation'). For example, in response to my question about the resources children of her age need to survive, Mamitu who did not talk about her poverty as a reason for her unhappiness described the importance of clothes, shoes, food and playing materials and said the following about her condition:

*Beth: Are you able to get what you have just mentioned to me?*

*Mamitu: since I was very little I didn't have enough clothes, shoes, food or playing materials but I know why. That is because my parents are poor and that they cannot meet all my needs, right. [I know that] they do not have the financial means. So I do not bother them [...] my friends' families are better economically (financially) than my family. My life is different from that of my friends. My friends wear different kinds of clothes, but [I cannot afford that] and I wear what I have. I really do not feel bad about this. Of course, as you can see I am a child, right? As a child I certainly wish I had what my friends have. However, because I know that my family is poor I do not have a great desire to have clothes like that. I do not desire them because I know I will not get them. I wear what I have.*

In the above quote, Mamitu attempted to deal with her material disadvantage by reducing her demands/wishes ('negotiation'). Mulatu who also did not talk about his material poverty as a reason for his unhappiness noted that children in his neighbourhood exclude children who do not have money and therefore money is important to 'fit in' (chapter 5 page 105) and said the following concerning his situation:

*Beth: Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned to me?*

*Mulatu: ... In terms of cents [money], it is not good to get used to having cents. If you cannot get cents [money], you will be forced to do bad things [like stealing]. It is not good always to have cents on your hands, although friends like someone who has cents. For that reason, they [my parents] do not give me cents [money] often.*

Mulatu dealt with his material disadvantage (i.e. the fact that his parents could not afford to give him money) by seeing his situation in a positive light ("it is not good to get use to having cents") ('positive cognitive restructuring'). Both Mamitu and Mulatu were also engaged in part-time jobs to support themselves and their families ('problem-solving').

As stated above, in response to their inability to fulfil their material needs, many of the children employed a mixture of different coping strategies. Hence, it is difficult to tell which strategy was effective and which was not. Nevertheless, working (an example of 'problem-solving') and seeking the support of others (an example of 'support seeking') were many of the children's preferred coping strategies. For example, when I asked Haile what it means to him when bad things happen to a child of his age he replied, "When there is nothing [to eat] at home" and said:

*Beth: What do you think a child who faces such kind of problem should do?*

*Haile: He should start to do a part time job and at the same time follow his education. Then he should save the money he gets from working and helps his family...*

Similarly, Hezera talked about material disadvantage after death of parents as something bad that can happen to a child of his age and said:

*Beth: What do you think children who face such kind of problem should do?*

*Hezera: ... If they [the children] are very young, they might be forced to go out on the street. However, before they go out on the street they should ask the help of their neighbours. There are organizations, which helps such kind of children. Besides, among many people there should be one considerate person [who will help them] [...] Even if your parents died, you have to be patient and work hard. If one of the*

*children go to school the other should support him by working. In this way, you would overcome problems.*

Hezera quote above suggest that seeking the help of neighbours and organizations which works on children ('support seeking'), being patient ('emotional regulation'), working hard ('problem solving') were all appropriate coping strategies depending on the demands of the situation. From the above accounts it is clear that many of the children were ready to change their situation through hard work both at present (e.g. by doing part time jobs) and future (by studying hard) so long as their situation allows.

It is also worth noting that compared to other risks the children used a broad range of coping strategies in response to their inability to fulfil their material needs. It is not clear whether this can explain why this risk has not emerged in many of the children's accounts as a major threat to wellbeing.

#### **6.4. Strategies to Deal with Lack of Physical Security**

Lack of physical security affected both girls and boys, albeit in different way, as described in the previous chapter. When confronted with lack of physical security (which occurred in the form of risks of rape, verbal and physical sexual harassment from older boys and adult men at their school, neighbourhood and workplace), many of the girls employed two coping strategies. First, they avoided those practices and places which they believed to be dangerous/risky such as staying outside home after dark, going to places alone (e.g. school, church and even to the school toilet), playing far from their houses and talking to strangers: an example of 'escape/avoidance'. Second, they sought advice and instrumental help from their friends and older sisters, which is an example of 'support seeking'. Esub who noted that one of the boys in her school used to harass her and she "could not even go to the toilet alone" (chapter 5 page 113), for example, said:

*..I was afraid to tell that [incident] to our teacher. I thought he [my teacher] might misunderstand me. I did not also tell that to my family [my parents]. If I told them that they would say our daughter is spoiled, they would consider me Durye [hooligan] so I preferred to discuss my problem [only] with my friends. They [my friends] told him [the boy] that I am not interested in such kind of things and that I want to focus on my education. After my friends' intervention, he stopped to harass me...*

Esub sought instrumental help from her friends ('support seeking'). Like her, many of the girls said when they are faced with harassment at their school, neighbourhood and workplace they prefer to share their experiences with their friends or older sisters rather than with their parents and teachers. They said that parents and teachers would not understand their problems and would even blame them for inciting the boys.

Tena who mentioned the issue of personal safety quite a number of times in her interview noted:

*Beth: Tell me about any aspects of your current behaviour or experience that worries your parents.*

*Tena: ...They say I should not talk to a stranger. They say if I talk to him [the stranger], he will snatch me and disappear [...] so my friends and I are very careful about talking to strangers.*

*Beth: What do you mean?*

*Tena: I mean when we play [outside home] we do not talk to people we do not know...*

Tena avoided talking to any strangers who she and her family believe is a source of danger ('escape/avoidance').

When confronted with lack of physical security (which occurred in the form of a fear of physical attack from older boys), the boys often employed three coping strategies: distancing themselves from the problem ('escape/avoidance'), seeking the support of their friends ('support seeking'), and doing nothing ('helplessness'). For example, Endalk said:

*Beth: Earlier you said that you get angry quickly, what makes you angry?*

*Endalk: ...I get angry when my friends [in the neighbourhood] harass me [...] if they are not bigger than me I get into fight with them but if they are bigger than me I just remain quiet. Nevertheless, deep down this makes me very angry.*

If he is harassed by children who are not physically bigger than him (his peers), Endalk said, he will fight with them ('opposition') but if he is harassed by children who are physically bigger than him (older children) he will "just remain quiet" ('helplessness'). Alemu who said that his main worry is if Duryewoch (hooligans) hits him on his way back from school (chapter 5 page 115) said:

*Sometimes when I see them from distance, I change my direction and run away. Because I get scared quickly, I refuse to go to the shop if it is after 7pm. I even get scared to go to the toilet [outside] alone after 7pm.*

Alemu distanced himself from the problem and avoided those practises, which he believed are reasons for lack of physical security such as going outside home after 7pm ('escape/avoidance').

In response to lack of physical security, distancing oneself from the problem ('escape/avoidance') and seeking the assistance of others ('support seeking') were effective coping strategies. For example, Esub who sought the intervention of her friends in response to harassment from one of the boys at her school noted, "after my friends' intervention he stopped to harass me". On the other hand, in the children's accounts doing nothing ('helplessness') emerged as ineffective. For example, Endalk who noted that when he is harassed by older children he "just remains quiet" went on to say "but deep down this makes me very angry".

In the context of lack of physical security, distancing oneself from the problem and seeking the assistance of others were also many of the children's preferred ways of coping. Eleni who said that a risk of rape at her school is what she considers a "major problem" (chapter 5 page 113), for example, noted:

*Eleni: The girls should leave the school as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, most of them remain there until night. They have to finish cleaning<sup>21</sup> and go to their home as soon as possible. They should listen to what our teachers and the guard tell us to do. If we are told to leave the school as soon as possible we should do like that. The girl who was raped last time is in Grade 6 and the boy [who raped her] is in Grade 7. She spent time with the boy during break time. A day before she was raped she also skipped class and spent time with that boy. The next day, it was her turn to clean the classroom [Grade 6 classroom]. It was also my turn to clean our classroom [Grade 5 classroom] so I was also there. My friends and I went to our home around 5 pm after cleaning our classroom. The next day we heard that that girl was raped. She went to her home late at night. After that incident we were told by the director [of the school] not to go to the toilet alone and to leave the school before it gets dark.*

A 13-year-old girl, 2007

Eleni's quote above underlines the importance of avoiding staying outside home after dark and going to the school toilet alone for the personal safety of the girls at her school. The importance of avoiding talking to strangers for personal safety also came out in the discussion I had with Etenu, a 12-year-old girl, based on her drawing (see Figure 17 below).



Figure 17: Thematic drawing by a 12-year-old girl of “unclean water passing by people’s homes and the children playing around this becoming sick” and “an unknown person snatching a girl”



### 6.5. Strategies to Deal with Ill Health and Disability

Here, I present the children’s coping strategies in relation to three different but related risks: death of parents, sickness (of self and parents) and fear of disability. In response to death of a parent or parents, the children employed two coping strategies: they kept thinking about the death of their parent/s, which is an example of ‘rumination’, and they saw their situation in a positive light, which is an example of ‘positive cognitive restructuring’. Many of the children who lost one or two of their parents employed an example of a ‘rumination’ coping. That is, in talking about different aspects of their life many of them repeatedly compared their life before and after the death of their parent/s and expressed sadness. Eleni who lost her mother in connection with the disturbance that followed the May 2005 election, for instance, talked about how life is different and difficult after the death of her mother quite a number of times in her interview. For the children who lived with caregivers this was particularly the case because many of them said they experienced mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers and their life condition (for

example in terms of getting emotional and material support) deteriorated after the death of their parent/s. Nonetheless, some of them, specifically Hezera and Tena, dealt with death of their parents in a positive way. Hezera, for example, noted:

*Beth: Are you happy with your life (with what you have, do and feel)?*

*Hezera: Yes, I am happy!*

*Beth: Why, please explain that to me.*

*Hezera: Despite the fact that I live with my sister and uncles and my parents are not alive. I was happy for being able to live with my grandmother [before she died six months ago].*

Despite losing my parents, Hezera was saying, I am happy to have the chance to live with my grandmother who, he said, was the main source of emotional and material support for him after the death of his parents. His grandmother died six months before I met him. His quote suggests that Hezera was trying to see his life in a positive light ('positive cognitive restructuring'). Tena who lived with her maternal grandmother, aunt and uncle after the death of her parents also conceptualized her situation in a positive way.

In the context of death of parents, the children's coping strategies might be affected by whether their parent/s died when they were very young or recently. The children who lost their parents recently tended to employ a strategy of 'rumination'. Whereas, Hezera who saw his situation in a positive light ('positive cognitive restructuring') lost his parents when he was very small, so he did not get the chance to know them. However, this factor alone did not affect the children's coping strategies. For example, despite the fact that Tena lost her parents recently (three years ago), like Hezera, she responded by seeing her situation in a positive light.

When confronted with their own sickness, the children employed two coping strategies: trying to solve the problem by themselves (an example of 'problem-solving') and seeking the financial support of parents and neighbours to go to a clinic, and seeking the mercy of God by going to the church or Holy water place (examples of 'support seeking'). In the case of minor illnesses such as headache all the children responded by trying to solve the problem by themselves. Many of them, for example, said when they have a headache they go to bed to take a rest and some of the girls said they put butter on their head. Some of the girls also told me that when they have stomach problems they chew ginger and rue (a bitter herb). In the case of major illnesses such as Tonsillitis, the children (e.g. Hezera) sought the financial support of parents and neighbours to go to the nearby clinics. Some of the

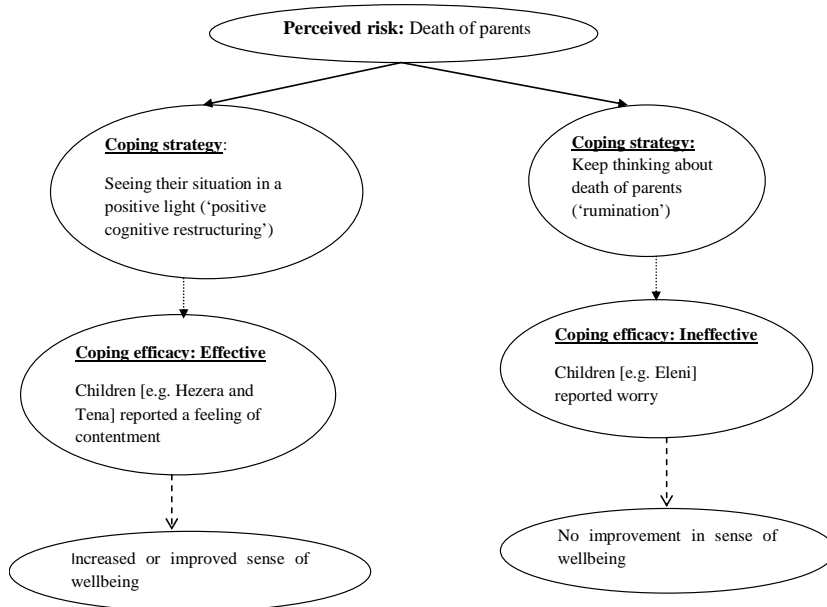
children responded by relying on their religion. When I met her at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork Rahwa, for example, told me that she stopped her education because she was sick for a month and half. When I asked her the cause of her illness, she said it is an evil eye. She said at first she went to a clinic thinking that she would feel better. However, when the outcome was unsuccessful, she said, she went to a Holy water place because her family and neighbours told her that it is an evil eye. Melese who experienced a car accident three times also said he went to a Protestant church so that they would give him first aid and pray for him.

The children who experienced sickness of their parents responded with either passivity ('helplessness') or optimism, e.g. hoping that their parents will get better soon which is an example of 'positive cognitive restructuring'. With regard to disability, which was mentioned in relation to car accidents, the only strategy that the children employed was avoiding practices they believed lead to a car accident such as playing on the asphalt road and walking in the middle of the road in their way to and back from school, an example of 'escape/avoidance'.

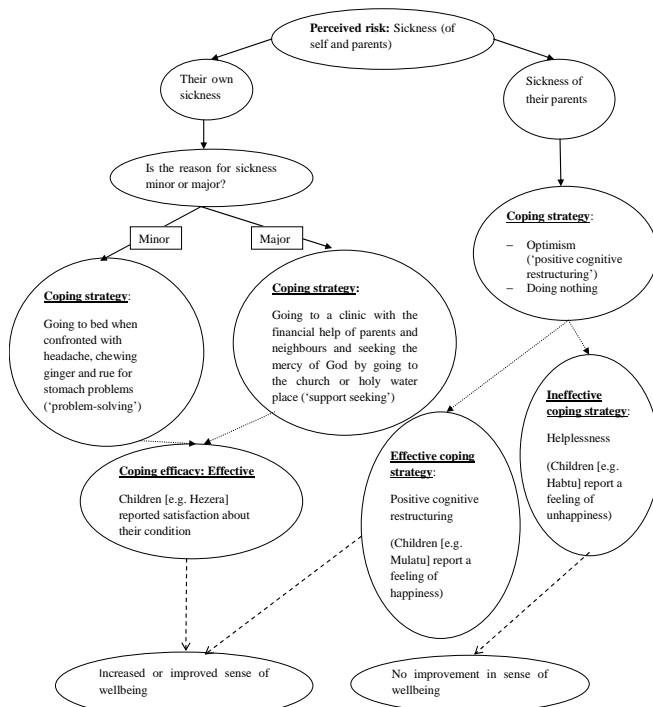
In response to death of parents, seeing one's situation in a positive light ('positive cognitive restructuring') was effective. That is, the children (Hezera and Tena) who employed this strategy reported contentment with their situation whereas the children who repeatedly thought about the death of their parent/s (an example of 'rumination') reported unhappiness about their life condition. With regard to sickness of self, all the strategies used by the children (i.e. 'problem-solving' and 'support seeking') appear to be effective. That is, the children who used them reported contentment about their situation. In the context of sickness of parents, the children who responded with optimism ('positive cognitive restructuring') were happy about their condition whereas those who responded with passivity ('helplessness') reported unhappiness about their situation. In response to disability, which was mentioned in relation to car accidents, distancing one's self from the problem ('escape/avoidance') was effective.

Figure 18: Schematic diagram of possible relations among perceived risk (ill health and disability) and the children's coping strategies, coping efficacy and sense of wellbeing

### A. Death of parents



### B. Sickness (of self and parents)



## 6.6. Discussion

Are the coping strategies, coping efficacy and possible relationships identified in the children's accounts different from those identified in the literature? The accounts of the children indicate that there were individual differences in terms of coping strategies that they employed and same children used different coping strategies to deal with similar risks that occur in different contexts. This finding is in line with much of the coping literature (e.g. Forsythe and Compos, 1987) which suggest that people's coping is flexible and context/situation specific.

The children's accounts of coping also broadly fit Skinner and colleagues' (2003) categorization. Of the 13 'families of coping' developed by the authors 10 appeared in the children's accounts. The three 'families of coping' that did not clearly appear in the children's accounts of coping were 'distraction', 'information seeking' and 'delegation'. 'Distraction' means dealing with a stressful situation by engaging in an alternative pleasurable activity e.g. watching TV. 'Information seeking' means attempting to learn more about a stressful situation in order to solve it. 'Delegation' includes lower order categories such as maladaptive help seeking, dependency, complaining, whining, and self-pity. The authors' categorization was, therefore, relevant to structure the children's ways of coping at a broad level and to relate their coping experiences with what we know so far from the existing coping literature. However, like other coping categorizations discussed in chapter 3, Skinner and colleagues' categorization does not adequately capture the full meanings of some of the children's culturally-specific coping strategies such as 'being patient' or "not getting angry quickly" which strongly emerged in many of the children's accounts. For example, based on the authors' categorization one can put "being patient" under an "emotional regulation" family of coping. Nevertheless, "emotional regulation" is too broad and it could not tell us about the particular value and meaning of patience to Ethiopian Society. For example, the children's accounts suggest that being patient means more than just controlling one's emotions: it is more than an individual attribute. It has a collective dimension, in that it means being a "good" child and behaving according to pervasive social norms. It also has potentially greater consequences for the children's relationships with people who are most important in their lives - their parents, neighbours and friends. Martin (2004) and Mulatu (1997) also reflected a similar perspective in their

study of the applicability of Western stress and coping models to rural Ethiopian adults and Ethiopian adolescents respectively.

The children used ‘problem-solving’ and ‘support seeking’ coping strategies in response to most of the risks that they faced, and negotiation (which means working out a compromise between the priorities of the individual and the constraints of the situation e.g. reducing demand) was used only in relation to inability to fulfil material needs (see the following table).

Table 6: ‘Family of coping’ used by the children in response to specific risks and their effectiveness as emerged in the accounts of the children who used them

<b>No.</b>	<b>Family of coping</b>	<b>Risks dealt with by the children using the coping</b>	<b>Effectiveness of the coping</b>
1.	Problem solving	Conflict between parents, conflict with friends (for minor reasons), teasing, conflict between the children and neighbours, inability to fulfil material needs and minor own sickness	Effective
2.	Support seeking	Conflict between and with parents, conflict with friends (for major reasons), inability to fulfil material needs, lack of physical security and major own sickness	Effective
3.	Positive-cognitive restructuring	Mistreatment, teasing, inability to fulfil material needs, death of parents, sickness of parents	Effective
4.	Rumination	Conflict with parents, mistreatment, exclusion from peer group, inability to fulfil material needs and death of parents	Ineffective
5.	Escape/avoidance	Conflict between and with parents, inability to fulfil material needs and lack of physical security	Ineffective except in response to lack of physical security
6.	Helplessness	Teasing, inability to fulfil material needs, lack of physical security and sickness of parents	Ineffective
7.	Social withdrawal	Conflict with friends (for major reasons), exclusion from peer group and conflict between parents/caregivers and neighbours.	Ineffective
8.	Emotional regulation	Conflict with parents and conflict with friends (for major reasons)	Effective
9.	Opposition	Conflict with parents and teasing	Ineffective
10.	Negotiation	Inability to fulfil material needs	Not clear

In terms of coping efficacy, problem solving, support seeking, positive-cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation emerged as effective whereas social withdrawal, opposition, helplessness and rumination emerged as ineffective. Escape/avoidance was

effective only in response to lack of physical security and the efficacy of negotiation, which was used in response to inability to fulfil material needs, was not clear. Problem solving, support seeking and emotional regulation were also emerged as preferred coping strategies by the children who used them. In fact, even the children who did not use them viewed problem solving and support seeking as a preferred coping strategy. Although positive-cognitive structuring emerged as effective, like social withdrawal, opposition, helplessness and rumination it was none of the children's preferred way of responding. Escape/avoidance was a preferred coping strategy only in the context of lack of physical security.

With regard to the relation between coping efficacy and wellbeing, the children's accounts suggest that there is a possible relation between the efficacy of their coping strategies and their sense of wellbeing. That is, when confronted with risks, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts seem to have an increased or improved sense of wellbeing, while those who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts appear to have no improvement in their sense of wellbeing.

Their accounts also suggest that their coping strategies for some of the risks (particularly conflict with friends) were influenced by both personal (such as temperament) and environmental (such as reasons for conflict and parental influence) resources.

In terms of the efficacy of particular coping strategies, the children who used problem solving, support seeking, positive-cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation appear to have improved or increased wellbeing, whereas those who used social withdrawal, opposition, helplessness and rumination appear to have no improvement in their wellbeing. Except in the context of lack of physical security, the children who used escape/avoidance also seem to have no improvement in their wellbeing. The efficacy of negotiation, which was used in relation to inability to fulfil material needs, was not clear. The coping literature reflects great variation with regard to the relative efficacy of particular coping strategies (see also Somerfield and McCrae, 2000). This is partly due to differences in conceptualization and methods of assessing coping efficacy (particularly selection and evaluation of outcomes), and ways of classifying coping strategies used by coping researchers. Nevertheless, many studies indicate that approach-or problem-focused coping strategies (e.g. problem solving) are more highly linked to positive child outcomes than

avoidant or emotion-focused (e.g. emotional regulation) coping strategies (Compas et al., 1988).

## **6.7. Conclusion**

Analyses of data from individual interviews with poor children in Addis Ababa revealed that the ways in which they dealt with risks were varied and complex. In support of much of the coping literature, which conceptualizes coping as a context and situation specific construct, their accounts suggest that there were individual differences among them in terms of the coping strategies they used and the same children used different coping strategies in response to similar risks that occurred in different contexts. Their accounts further suggest that there was a possible relation between the efficacy of their coping strategies and their sense of wellbeing. However, the children's coping strategies were not about just what the children do and think in specific contexts of risks. Their accounts suggest that their coping strategies were shaped by not only personal (such as temperament) and environmental (such as parental influences) resources but also by their access to relevant protective factors (such as good relationships with parents/caregivers). So, protective factors and factors that affected the children's wellbeing positively ('positive influences'), which refer to research question 3, will be addressed in the following chapter.



## **Chapter 7: Poor children's Perspectives on 'Positive Influences' and 'Protective Factors' for Wellbeing**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This chapter has two objectives that are related to research question 3, which is “what are the factors that the children see as having a positive influence on their wellbeing? In addition, what are the factors that they viewed as moderating the negative effects of risks to lead to positive or resilient outcomes? Are these factors different from those identified in the literature?” The first objective is to explore the factors that the children interviewed in Addis Ababa perceived as positively affecting their wellbeing. The second objective is to examine the factors that they viewed as moderating the negative effects of risks to bring about positive or resilient outcomes. The first objective is related to factors which Woodhead (2004) calls ‘positive influences’ and the second objective is related to those which are referred to as ‘protective factors’ in the risk and resilience literature (as explained in chapter 3). ‘Positive influences’ are factors that affect children’s wellbeing positively, in short or long term (Woodhead, 2004). ‘Protective factors’ are conditions or processes that modify the effects of risks so as to lead to positive or resilient outcomes (Garmezy et al., 1984; Rutter, 1987).

I recognize that dealing with both ‘positive influences’ and ‘protective factors’ in a single chapter is confusing mainly because the two concepts emerge from two different bodies of literature. Nevertheless, the children’s accounts in this study suggest that ‘positive influences’ and ‘protective factors’ are not unrelated concepts. Many of the children’s accounts suggest that good relationships with family members, friends, peers and neighbours positively affected their wellbeing (hence ‘positive influences’). And the accounts of the children who were able to cope effectively in the face of risks indicate that good relationships with these categories of people helped them to buffer the effects of risks and even to prevent their initial occurrence (hence ‘protective factors’). Therefore, particularly in the section, which deals with relationships, I will discuss how good relationships with these categories of people helped the children both as ‘positive influences’ and as ‘protective factors’ for wellbeing. However, the focus of other sections of this chapter is on ‘positive influences’.

The chapter has two major sections: section one where I present the children's perspectives on 'positive influences' and 'protective factors' for wellbeing and section two where I relate their perspectives with what has been found in the literature so far. I make two major points in this chapter. The first is that from the perspectives of poor children in Addis Ababa good relationships with family members, friends, peers and neighbours were the most important factor that positively affected their wellbeing ('positive influences'). And good relationships with these categories of people were also perceived as major external protective factors in different contexts of risks. My second point is that the kinds of coping strategies the children used in response to risks were influenced by the children's access to protective factors. That is, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts were those who reported having access to protective factors and the children who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective were those who reported not having access to protective factors.

An in-depth thematic Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of interview transcripts produced six superordinate themes in relation to what the children considered as 'positive influences' on their wellbeing. These are:

- 1. Good relationships with**
  - 1.1. Family members**
  - 1.2. Friends and peers**
  - 1.3. Neighbours**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Working**
- 4. Ability to worship and engage in cultural/social activities**
- 5. Hygiene and health**
- 6. Ability to fulfil material needs**

As with risks for wellbeing (Chapter 5), relationships emerged as the most important factor in terms of positively affecting the children's wellbeing. Hence, like Chapter 5, whilst the rest of this chapter discusses each of the above themes, the primary focus is relationships.

## **7.2. Good Relationships**

In this section, I will discuss the importance of good relationships with family members, friends, peers and neighbours for the children's wellbeing first as 'positive influences' and then as 'protective factors'. I also examine the "rules" that the children were expected to follow in order to have good relationships with these categories of people.

### **7.2.1. Good family relationships**

#### **Good family relationships as 'positive influences'**

##### ***Good relationship with parents***

As illustrated in chapter 5, the children in two-parent and male-absent single-parent families had a strong attachment to their mothers and their relationship with their fathers was quite weak. Many of these children directly and indirectly indicated that having a good relationship with their mothers was very important for their happiness, which partly meant having a conflict free relationship. Endalk lived in a two-parent family. Although he had five siblings and a father who was paralyzed and confined to bed, he mainly interacted with his mother and older sister whom he supported with domestic work. He noted:

*Beth: What things/issues make you happy?*

*Endalk: ...if I spend the day with them [my mother and older sister] with love, without quarrelling with them, I will be happy*

However, for many of the children a good relationship with their mothers was not limited to having a peaceful or conflict free relationship. Many of them also expected love, care, support, attention and supervision from their mothers. Mulatu who lived in a two-parent family, for example, noted:

*Beth: What are the characteristics of a good parent?*

*Mulatu: For a mother the main thing (because she spends most of her time at home) is giving her children love. [...] she has [also] to show an interest in her children's education.*

For some of the children having a good relationship with their mothers also implied getting praise when they were obedient and being treated equally with siblings. When I asked him about things/issues that make him happy, Belete who lived in a male-absent single-parent family said, "I become happy even when they [my mother and aunts] praise me for my obedience". His use of the word "even" suggests that being praised for obedience is

something Belete took for granted. For many of the children knowing that they are making their mothers happy by helping or obeying them was also very important for their own happiness:

*Beth: what makes you happy?*

*Tsbay: when I do what my mother told me to do. If she becomes happy, I will also be happy*

A 13 years old girl

*I work here because I want my mother to be happy not for any other reason. When I clean the house and tell my mother about it if she said 'that is wonderful, you are a good child I will be happy*

Endalk, a 12 years old boy

For most of the children who lived with caregivers, their relationships with their siblings were very important for their happiness. Older siblings in particular provided these children with love, care and support. This was also the case for the children who came from two-parent and single parent families. This was mainly because in the absence of fathers (because of death or separation) or in those cases where there were irresponsible fathers the children expected to get love, care, support, attention and supervision from their older siblings, in addition to their mothers.

### ***Good relationship among family members***

In addition to having a good relationship with their mothers, the children emphasised the importance of having good relationships among family members for their happiness. Mamitu who lived in a two-parent family, for example, noted:

*Beth: What do you think children of your age need to be happy with their life?*

*Mamitu: What they need to be happy is not a big house [...] if they have a small Gojjo [small hut], it is [enough]. It is quite enough if they have a small house where there is love, where family members don't fight with each other, where they love each other [...] I don't think a place becomes a good house because it is physically big or beautiful; A good house is one in which there is happiness. Even a small house becomes nice when it is filled with happiness, when they [family members] love each other. That means when a brother obeys his sister, for instance. You feel good about your house not because it is renovated or decorated. [You feel good about it] if your mother and father love each other. [If there is love] in the house children grow in a good way. [...] [So] although it is small [in size] a Gojjo [hut] where there is love is big for them [the children] because there is love inside...*

Mamitu's view that peaceful and loving relationships between parents and generally among family members are more important for children's happiness than living in "a big house" (a sign of material advantage) was shared by Habtu and Mulatu who lived in a single parent and two-parent family respectively. In response to my question about whether a "good life" is similar to or different from a "happy life" Habtu conceptualizes "good life" as being materially secure and said:

*They are different. For example, if there is love among family members you will be happy even when you live in a poor family. If there is love you can be happy even when you sleep [with an] empty stomach.*

When I asked him what he thinks are the characteristics of a good house for children of his age Mulatu echoed Mamitu in saying:

*In my opinion a good house is one in which there is love. It is love that matters. It does not matter whether the house is big or small, old or new.*

Therefore, from these children's perspectives living in a family where there is a peaceful and loving relationship among family members is more important for children's happiness than material advantage or being materially secure. Mamitu expressed peaceful and loving relationships among family members in terms of family members obeying and not fighting with one another.

### **Good family relationships as 'protective factors'**

In the previous chapter, the coping strategies that emerged as effective in relation to conflict between parents were those used by the children who reported consistent emotional support from at least one of their parents and older siblings. And the children who reported no consistent emotional support from at least one of their parents and older siblings used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts. For example, the accounts of the children (Mamitu, Mulatu and Tsbay) who used effective coping strategies suggest that having a good relationship either with one or with both of their parents and older siblings helped them to buffer the effects of conflict between their parents and even to prevent its occurrence. Although Mamitu had a very loose relationship with her father who, she said, often came home drunk, she said she gets consistent emotional and material support from

her mother and older siblings. Unlike her father, her mother spent time with her and met her needs as much as possible. Probably for that reason, Mamitu was very sympathetic towards her. She said she works mainly to reduce her mother's stress because "my mother is responsible for supporting all of us [and as a result] she faces a lot of pressure". When I asked her to tell me about the kind of relationship there is among her family members she said:

*There is conflict in my family. My father comes home always drunk and hits my mother and older brother for no reason. We [my siblings and I] live happily because of our mother. She is everything to us. If she is not here, I do not know what kind of life we will have....*

Mamitu's quote above suggests that the strong attachment she and her siblings had with their mother and her support ("she is everything to us") helped them to cope effectively in the face of conflict at home.

Mamitu also talked positively about her siblings. She said her older brother supervises her activities and sometimes helps her with her education. She on her part gave him pocket money whenever he finds no business (he washes cars). Her older sister who dropped out from grade seven to support the family (working as a parking lot attendant) bought her clothes and shoes every year for the New Year's holiday. So when I asked her whether she is able to get the things she has mentioned to me in relation to my question about what children of her age need to be happy with their lives, which include peaceful and loving relationships among family members, she said:

*Sometimes there will be conflict in the family [...] [but] we [my siblings and I] advise my mother. We tell her not to argue with him [my father] and to be patient. He [my father] always wants to fight with her. However, when none of us [my siblings and I including my mother] talks to him, when there is nobody who talks to him [in the house] he goes to bed quietly.*

Mamitu's quote above suggests that she and her siblings prevented the occurrence of fights between their parents not only by advising their mother "to be patient" but also by allying with her to persuade their father to go to bed "quietly" (without a fight).

Mulatu, the oldest child in his family, described his relationship with both of his parents as 'very good' and said both of them provide him with consistent emotional and material support. Although his father came home late and Mulatu did not have much chance to

spend time with him, he was very sympathetic towards him. He said his father does not spend time with him only because he is busy and that as much as possible he supports him with his education. Mulatu also tried his best to establish a close relationship with his father (for example everyday he went to his work place to visit him). His closeness with his parents helped Mulatu not only to cope effectively in the face of conflict between his parents but also to make peace between them (see pages 129-130). Tsabay's account, as with Mamitu, suggests that although she had a very weak relationship with her father who, she said, does not spend much of his time at home, she benefited from consistent emotional support from her mother and older sister in the face of conflict between her parents.

Conversely, the accounts of the children (Rahwa and Endalk) who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts suggest that none of them received consistent emotional support from any of their parents or older siblings. Rahwa, the oldest child in her family, said she does not get along with her maternal aunt and stepfather who she described as the authority figures in her family:

*Beth: Earlier, you said that you were not happy when you were living at your mother's place what is the reason.*

*Rahwa: ... I do not get along with my aunt. She either hits me or insults me for nothing. I just remain quiet. I also do not get along with the father of my half-brothers. He hits and insults me. When he gets drunk the first thing he does, even before he sits, is hit me. He says 'you devil' and then hits me...*

Rahwa went on to say that, she also does not get along with her mother who, she said, "treats me as if I am not her daughter":

*...She [my mother] also hits me sometimes. She even tells me to get out of the house. She says 'I do not want to see your eyes. Go and find your father'. When she treats me like this, I get very disheartened...*

The above two quotes indicate that, unlike the children who used effective coping strategies when faced with conflict between their parents, Rahwa perceived her relationships with the adults in her family (i.e. her mother, step-father and maternal aunt) as bad. This was also the case for Endalk who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in his accounts. He said he does not get along with his family members including his mother who he viewed as one of the most important people in his life. The major reason for his

disagreement with his family members, Endalk said, is that all of them, including his mother, do not always give him love:

*Beth: Are you able to get the things you have mentioned to me in relation to the resources children of your age need to survive?*

*Endalk: ...When I was the age of Haymanot [my younger sister] it is not only sometimes that they [family members] do not give me love [but] it was always. They do not give me food. If there was little food at home, they would eat it and then I sleep with an empty stomach.*

Endalk also felt that his mother discriminates against him in favour of his siblings particularly in favour of his older sister (see, for example, his quote in chapter 5 page 97). He even said that his mother is afraid of his older sister and does not listen to him but her. Endalk also felt that his father and older siblings hit him for no reason and said he does not get along with all of them. In the discussion I had with him at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork, he noted, for example,

*Beth: Are there changes concerning your father since I saw you last time?*

*Endalk: Last time I told you that he disturbs the house very much [often], now it is even worse. I do not think his behaviour will change forever. He hits [me] by throwing shoes. Every night he makes me cry...*

As with Rahwa, Endalk perceived his relationships with the adults in his family (i.e. his parents) as bad. Although, unlike Rahwa, he had older siblings he perceived them as a source of anger rather than emotional support. Hence, based on the above analysis it is fair to conclude that there was a connection between the quality of relationship the children had with the adults in their family (specifically with those who were authority figures) and their older siblings, and the type of coping strategies that they used in response to conflict between their parents. The children who reported consistent emotional support from at least one of their parents and older siblings reported using coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts while those who reported no consistent emotional support from at least one of their parents and older siblings reported using coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts.

The coping strategy that emerged as effective in response to mistreatment at the hands of caregivers was also the one used by the child (Hezera) who reported consistent emotional and material support from his older sibling and neighbours, and good relationships with his



friends and peers. Conversely, the coping strategy that emerged as ineffective in response to a similar risk was the one used by the children (Bereket and Senayte) who reported no consistent emotional and material support from their older siblings and neighbours, and no good relationships with their friends and peers. The account of Hezera indicates that in addition to the support that he got from his neighbours and his good relationships with his friends and peers, having a good relationship with his older sister helped him to cope effectively in the face of mistreatment. In response to my question about what things/issues make him happy Hezera, for example, replied:

*Despite the fact that my uncles mistreat me, I live happily because my sister is with me....*

Hezera noted that he has a relationship that is based on cooperation with his sister and that they care for each other. Most of the time, he obeyed her and she, on her part, supervised and showed an interest in his activities.

In contrast, Bereket had a very variable relationship with his older sister and had a very inconsistent relationship with his neighbours, and did not get along with his friends and peers. During the early days of my contact with him, he talked about his older sister as a source of happiness and comfort. In talking about his happy moments, for instance, he mentioned the times he spent with her. He expressed this in terms of playing, studying and going to the church with her. He was also happy about the supervision and care he got from her. However, later his sister became one of the issues that caused him aggravation. His relationship with his sister started to change after he stopped obeying her. Senayte was the oldest child in her family and therefore did not have the opportunity to get emotional and material support from an older sibling. She also did not interact with her neighbours, friends and peers at all as her caregiver did not allow her to go outside her house. Therefore, for different reasons Bereket and Senayte did not have any source of emotional support when they were confronted with mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers.

What is more, the accounts of the children (Hezera and Tena) who used effective coping strategies in response to death of their parents indicate that, after the death of their parents they were getting consistent emotional and material support from older siblings, maternal grandmother and other people. This is unlike the children who used ineffective coping strategies in response to a similar risk. For example, Tena said she has a very good

relationship with her caregiver (maternal grandmother) and other people who live in the caregiver's house (her aunt, uncle, a niece and younger sister):

*Beth: With whom are you close with among your family members?*

*Tena: I am very close with all of them.*

*Beth: How would you describe your closeness with them?*

*Tena: I chat with them; play with them, we joke with each other and I am very close with them in every respect.*

This suggests that in the context of death of parent/s consistent emotional support from older siblings, maternal grandmother and other people such as neighbours served as a protective factor.

### **Obedience and respect: decisive factors for good relationships with family members**

The children's accounts suggest that their relationships with family members depended on whether or not they were obedient and respectful towards them. That is, children who were obedient and respectful were perceived as more likely to have a good relationship with their family members than those who were not. Obedience meant listening and doing what parents and people who are older are requiring. It could mean performing tasks assigned by these people like doing different kinds of domestic work, but it could also mean listening and acting as these people advise. Respect was often expressed in terms of being obedient. It also meant treating people according to their age and social status (for example religious leaders should be respected whatever age they are).

At home, children were primarily expected to obey their mothers since most of their fathers did not spend time at home. However, the type of relationship the children had with their fathers also depended on whether the children obeyed their mothers or not. A child who obeys his mother, the children noted, is more likely to have a good relationship with his father than one who does not:

*Beth: What are the characteristics of a good father?*

*Mamitu: A good father means one who looks after you [...] however, a father becomes a good father to you if you work in the house, if you obey your mother and older siblings. If you behave properly, he would say 'I like this girl and I want to raise her by being a good father'. Your mother also becomes good for you when you work, when you obey her and carry out the work, which she told you to carry out*

A 13-year-old girl

In our discussion of a “bad” and a “good” child, the children also expressed the importance of obeying and respecting family members (including older siblings) in order to get love, care, support, attention and supervision:

*Beth: Can you describe a good girl for me? How should she behave?*

*Tena: she does not disturb at home, she obeys orders and she will do everything that they [family members] told her to do.*

*Beth: what are the things that should be done for such a girl, I mean for a good girl.*

*Tena: her parents would do everything she wants them to do.*

*Beth: What about a bad girl?*

*Tena: she does not obey her parents, does not listen to what they say to her and she will not say okay to them and always refuses to listen.*

*Beth: what are the things that such a girl would be deprived of?*

*Tena: she will not get love from members of her family; they will hate her for being disobedient and call her stupid.*

Although as a rule all the children were expected to be obedient and respectful, girls were expected to respect this “rule” much more steadfastly than boys did. Moreover, in talking about obedience boys often mentioned running errands while girls combined running errands with domestic work.

Reasons the children gave for disobedience included being sent to distant places on an errand, being ordered or sent on an errand repeatedly, being ordered or sent on an errand while studying, playing, doing other important things, or when planning to visit a friend or go to a church or a mosque, and not being appreciated for being obedient. The children also said that they sometimes declined to obey when parents refused to provide what they have asked for (for example when they decline to buy clothing, especially on holidays) and when the parents ask them to perform too many things at the same time. Many of the children also mentioned that if they were told to do something by parents or neighbours immediately after a fight with a friend they would often refuse to obey (probably because they still feel angry).

### **7.2.2. Good relationships with friends**

#### **Good relationships with friends as ‘positive influences’**

The children’s accounts suggest that one of the most important aspects of their lives was their relationship with friends. All of them attached greater importance to friendship than to most other aspects of their lives. This was probably because they spent much more time

with their friends than with any other category of people. While doing domestic work, or running errands, while working for payment or going to school, while studying or playing they would often be in the company of friends. Most of the children interviewed had three kinds of friends: neighbourhood friends, school friends and friends at the work place. Some of the children also had “church friends”, that is, friends who went to church with them. In many cases, however, same group of children became neighbourhood, school, work place, and church friends to each other or combined two or three of the roles at a time.

The children expressed the importance of having good relationships with friends for their happiness in three ways. First, they mentioned it in relation to playing. For all the children interviewed, playing was reported as a major source of happiness. Some of them even said that they did not mind whether they ate or not if they got the chance to play, and, as discussed in chapter 5, the children said that they needed their friends in order to have fun.

Despite the children’s emphasis on the importance of playing, in many of their neighbourhoods there were no playing fields. The boys had to walk long distances to go to football fields, and there was often great competition for these grounds so that children who arrived late from distant sites ended up playing on the streets. Often older children also occupied the field forcefully. Moreover, if the children did not have a ‘proper’ ball they could not play on these fields. Most of the interviewed boys often said: “you can’t play on the field with *yelastic kuas* [a ball made from rolled-up discarded plastic bags]”. This might be because of fear of teasing (see, for instance, Endalk’s quote in chapter 5 pages 104-105). The absence of playing fields close enough to their homes dictated not only where the children played but also when they could play. Most of the boys tended to limit playing football to Sundays because Sundays were the only time they could play on the streets with relative freedom due to reduced vehicular traffic. On the other hand, most of the girls’ play was limited to those activities that did not take them away far from their houses. The girls’ most popular games were jumping rope, chase and run, and hide and seek. Older girls tended to simply sit and chat with their friends.

Second, for many of the children friends were sources of material and emotional support, and getting support from friends was reported as contributing to their happiness by almost all the interviewed children. For instance, Mamitu worked as a daily labourer in a nearby Market. She fetched water for payment for merchants who sell used clothes. With

her income, she supported her family and herself. When I asked her the things that make her happy at the work place, she said:

*Because we [my friends and I] spend our day there [at the work place] together, it makes me very happy when we help each other with our work. If I had to carry two or three buckets [of water] and I get a helping hand [from one of my friends] and my load is reduced I will do the same for her another day. When we do things like that for each other, it makes me happy. [...] the three of us, I mean my friends, help each other very much, except when we quarrel. When we quarrel, we get angry and do not bother to help each other.*

What is more, on holidays (such as New Year's Day, Christmas, Easter etc), most of the children would team up with their friends and put money together to go to recreational places such as to a park and Zoo. Children who worked and earned money put aside some amount of their income everyday for this purpose. Those who do not work might receive small amounts of money from parents and neighbours. During holidays, there were also different means of getting money. Boys would sell *chibo* (small bundles of dried wood) and *qetema* (tall grass), which were set on fire as part of holiday rituals at Christmas or New Year. Girls would team up into groups to go from house to house and sing holiday songs, distributing flowers or images that carry holiday messages along the way.

Third, for some of the children having friends in itself was very important for their happiness because it meant that they were not alone. When I asked him what things/issues make him happy, Mulatu, a 13-year-old boy, said I become happy “even when I say that ‘I have a friend’”. At the end of our discussion about friends and friendship, when I asked Belete whether there are issues that I did not raise but which he thinks are important regarding friends, he replied:

*I would like to say that friends are our life [...] so when you are with your friends you become happy*

### **Good relationships with friends as ‘protective factors’**

When they were faced with risks, having good relationships with close friends and as a result getting material and emotional support from them helped some of the children as a protective factor. For example, Eleni who was distressed by not ‘standing equal’ with her

friends (in terms of not being bought clothing and not being given money by parents during holidays) noted:

*My friend said I should not worry about this [not being given money on holidays] because I am a child and that I can get these things in the future. She strengthened me. They [my friends] also contributed their extra money and bought me a pair of earrings. My friends console me.*

In response to my question about his relationship with his best friends, Mulatu also said:

*When I quarrel with my parents, I go to my friends. They [my best friends] help me to cool down*

Apart from close friends in the neighbourhood and at school, none of the children, however, mentioned their peers (“children in the neighbourhood”) as ‘protective factors’. One possible reason for this is that most of them said they do not discuss “problems” with their peers aside from close friends. This is, I think, because in the eyes of the children peers were not close enough to be trusted with “problems”, which were part of the children’s private lives.

### **‘Being there for each other’: an important factor for having good relationships with friends**

Interviews with the children concerning characteristic/s of a “good friend” suggest that “being there for each other” was an important factor for having good relationship with friends. This was described by the children in terms of playing together, helping each other during fights, correcting and advising each other when making mistakes, studying together, supporting each other in terms of work, food or money, giving each other moral support, avoiding conflict between each other and generally fulfilling each other’s wants. For example, when I asked them to describe a good friend, Endalk and Bereket said

*Endalk: a good friend is someone who does good things for me if I did something good for him. He should advise me and correct me when I am wrong and I should do the same for him, he should tell me directly when I am wrong. When we play, it should be with love and happiness....*

*Beth: Does this also apply to school friends or is it different there?*

*Endalk: It is not different. School friends too should play together and should avoid conflict. If someone comes to attack one of them the other should help; they should*

*study together, help each other in doing home work, if you lost your pen or pencil they should help you in finding it, they should not steal your materials, they should not try to put you against somebody else by spreading rumours.*

A 12-year-old boy

*Bereket: a good friend spends time with me, does not quarrel with me and for instance if I have money I will give it to him and he will do the same if he has money.*

A 12-year-old boy

Unlike the boys who emphasised doing things for one another, many of the girls described a “good friend” in terms of characteristics like having consistent behaviour towards each other, being open to each other, being able to keep each other’s secrets, etc.

*Senayte: a good friend does not change her character on you.*

*Beth: what does that mean? Can you please explain that to me?*

*Senayte: If a friend is not a good one, she will pretend to be with me and abandon me for others tomorrow. When I call her, she would pretend not to have heard me. She would come to me only when there is no one beside her.*

A 12-year-old girl

*Esub: A good friend will be open with you. She will tell you about things. She does not hide things from you. She discusses everything with you and you do the same.*

A 13-year-old girl

The children’s accounts also suggest that as long as the above ‘rule’ (“being there for each other”) is followed they did not mind the religion, ethnic background and age of the children they choose as friends or whom they associate with, as described below.

### ***Choice of friends and association***

Interviews with the children indicate that religion, ethnic and age differences were not factors in their choice of friends and who they associate with. Christian children had Muslim friends and vice-versa. The friends of the two Protestant children I interviewed were also mixed in terms of their religion: they had both Christian and Muslim friends. None of the children I interviewed gave importance to ethnic differences when associating with other children. In fact, most of them said they did not know the ethnic origins of their friends. In terms of age, most of the children’s friends were their peers, but the children had also friends who were younger or older than they were by two to four years.

The same flexibility did not apply with regard to gender, however, as most boys had male friends and girls had female friends. Many of them told me that around the age of 10 they stopped spending time with children of opposite sex. The most common reason given by the children was when they grow older they tend to be shy towards children of opposite sex. Some of them talked about instances of being bullied for playing with children of opposite sex. For the girls there was also the issue of listening to their parents' and neighbours' advice. Many of the girls said their parents and neighbours would not be happy if they saw them playing with boys. However, a few boys and girls played and spent time with children of opposite sex. Mamitu who played and spent time with boys, for example, said there are only a few girls in her neighbourhood and because of that, "children from opposite sex [in her neighbourhood including her] play together without being shy towards each other". She did not mention whether her parents and neighbours were happy about her playing with boys or not.

Pertaining to economic status, almost all the friends of the children I interviewed were poor. This might be because the children did not get much chance to associate with children who did not live in poverty as most of them live in a poor neighbourhood and go to government schools (as do most other children from lower economic status).

All the children also noted (directly and indirectly) that children have to have socially desirable characteristics in order to be their friends. This was, I think, because their parents advised them to associate with such friends. This essentially meant being obedient and respectful to parents, neighbours and generally to people older than them; being a good student (studying hard and attending school regularly); not wasting time in 'undesirable' places such as going to video houses or gambling. Nevertheless, the children's accounts indicate that, in reality this did not always work. Some of the children interviewed had, for instance, friends who were not good at school and who spent a lot of time in 'undesirable' places.

In talking about "best" friends, most of the children described their "best" friends as those who spend a good deal of time with them. Very often, it was children who grew up together that become best friends. These children's parents would also know each other very well. However, physical proximity was not always sufficient, as described in the next section on relationships with peers.



### 7.2.3. Good relationships with peers

#### Good relationships with peers as ‘positive influences’

As it was the case with friends, good relationship with peers was important for the children’s happiness. Their accounts suggest that children who were accepted by their peers were more likely to describe themselves as happy than those who were rejected by peers. As with friends, peers were important for the children mainly in terms of playing and giving each other support. For all the boys in the interview, playing football with “children in the neighbourhood” was a major source of happiness. And, as described in Chapter 5, some of the girls played and spent time with “children in the neighbourhood”, both boys and girls. In response to my question about what makes her happy in relation to “children in the neighbourhood”, Mamitu, for example, said:

*If there was a task at my house all the children in this neighbourhood would come [to my house] and carry out the task with me. Their cooperation was very nice. Even the boys worked like us [the girls]. Then around 6 PM, we would meet again for playing. We would play Abarosh [ran and chase]. However, often we would play football because there were many boys [in the group].*

In addition to playing and getting support, Mamitu noted, she gets the supervision, which her parents could not provide, from her involvement with her peer group:

*Every Sunday all of us [both boys and girls] used to wash ourselves. The boys had their own room and we had our [in the compound]. If we do not wash at the same time, we discuss among ourselves. If you refused to wash, there was a girl [one of the children’s older sister] who supervised us, they would tell her about it. Then she would be angry with you and you would not be allowed to watch TV at her house with the others. It means you will be excluded if you do not take care of your hygiene. It was very nice!*

It appears that peer groups also gave many of the children a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging was expressed by the children in terms of doing different activities together in the neighbourhood like cleaning the surroundings together, studying together and creating recreational clubs (sport and music clubs) together. Most of the boys I interviewed, for example, belonged to a neighbourhood football club.

### **‘Fitting in’: an important factor for getting along with peers**

The interviews I conducted with the children suggest that conformity or the appearance of conformity with one’s peer group and therefore displaying a character “similar” to other members of the group was important for them to get along:

*Beth: What do children of your age need to have fun?*

*Mulatu: You mean children in this neighbourhood.*

*Beth: Yes, your peers including those who live in this neighbourhood.*

*Mulatu: They have to make their behaviour like us. [It requires] becoming like them in order to spend time together. It means behaving like them. Helping each other when doing something, not changing character, if they behave similarly they can play together. When we also go together [to the football field] we can only play together if we behave in a similar manner. Otherwise, they fight with each other. If they fight they can’t play together. Therefore, it is necessary that we have to make our behaviour uniform.*

A 13-year-old boy

In the children’s accounts, having socially acceptable characteristics (like being obedient and respectful to parents and neighbours) was also linked with having good relationships with peers. In response to the above question, Mulatu also noted:

*I get along well with children in this area. They like me. They like me because I always obey their parents. For this reason, their parents consider me as a good child and advise their children to be friends with me...*

‘Fitting in’ was also articulated by the children in terms of economic status as described in chapter 5.

#### **7.2.4. Good relationships with neighbours**

##### **Good relationships with neighbours as ‘positive influences’**

Many of the children’s accounts suggest that a good relationship with neighbours was important for their happiness. For many of them neighbours were sources of material and emotional support. Hezera lost his parents at an early age. He lived with his uncles but depended heavily on his neighbours for emotional and material support as none of his uncles provided him with support. At the end of our discussion regarding family members, I asked him whether there are issues, which I did not mention but which he thinks, are important concerning family members. He replied:

*The thing you did not mention is that you only asked me about this family but you did not focus much on them [my neighbours]. I consider my neighbours as my family. I eat my dinner there, also my lunch, they help me with everything. I consider as my home their house not this one. They take care of me when I get sick. They provide me with clothing.*

In situations of conflict (between parents and between parents/caregivers and the children), illness and death, neighbours were also the nearest people who come to help. What is more, for many of the children neighbours were sources of entertainment as many of them watched television at their neighbours' houses. For example, Endalk, a 12 year old boy, described how "I become happy when I go there [neighbour's house]. They don't nag me and also I can watch movies". As described in chapter 5, having good relationship with neighbours was also important for having good relationship with friends and peers and therefore "not being alone":

*Beth: What would a child of your age need to know to grow up well in this area?*

*Belete: Earlier, I said to you that it is not nice to be alone. Here too the most important thing is getting along with the community: not being alone. He has to be able to live Mehaberawi Nuro [literally social life]. Here [in this area], one who does not live Mehaberawi Nuro will be isolated. Therefore, he has to get along with the community.*

A 13-year-old boy

To my surprise, the children hardly mentioned their relatives (such as aunts and uncles) as sources of support. Particularly for children who lost both of their parents, relatives were not very helpful, except those who took the responsibility of a caregiver. After the death of their parents, these children said, their relatives hardly came to their houses:

*They [relatives] used to come before but not now. Before our parents died they used to come to our house every Sunday. They used to bring with them oranges and bananas and spend time with our parents. But slowly they disappeared. After their death [the death of my parents] they came for about a month and then they disappeared. When I compare the present with the past I become very unhappy*

Amare- a 12 year old boy

*When Azalo [my father] was here three of his relatives used to come to our house. After his death none of them visit us. Relatives betray you!*

Habtu- a 12 years old boy

### **Good relationship with neighbours as ‘protective factors’**

Having a good relationship with neighbours and as a result getting emotional and material support from them, as with close friends, helped some of the children as a protective factor in the face of risks. Hezera who experienced mistreatment at the hands of his caregivers, for example, said:

*Beth: Comparing with your aspired state of life, how do you judge your present life conditions?*

*Hezera: It does not differ much.*

*Beth: Can you please explain that to me?*

*Hezera: My life is not that much bad. Even if I do not have my own family [parents], our neighbours are like family. They provide me with everything I want. There is no problem.*

Rahwa who experienced mistreatment at the hands of her stepfather, aunt and even her mother noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your past happy memories.*

*Rahwa: ...after I came here [at my caregiver's house], I am happy with everything. [...] She [my caregiver who is a neighbour] is very sympathetic towards me. Even when I was with my parents, she is the one who feeds me.*

As with the children's relationship with their parents, obedience and respect were decisive factors for having a good relationship with neighbours and therefore getting support. Mulatu, for example, said:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in terms of obedience.*

*Mulatu: ...I am very obedient to my neighbours. For that reason, they like me very much. When my parents go to rural area for bereavement<sup>22</sup> I would spend the night at their house. My parents did not bother to leave me food. They just gave me the key to our house because they knew that I could always eat at our neighbour's house. Besides, most of them shower blessings on me and I am happy for that.*

Based on the accounts of interviewed children, the preceding section discussed good relationships with family members, friends, peers and neighbours both as ‘positive influences’ and ‘protective factors’ for the children's wellbeing, and the “rules” the children had to follow in order to have good relationships with these categories of people. The rest of this chapter focuses on other themes that emerged from their accounts in relation to factors that positively affected their wellbeing (‘positive influences’). These are

education, working, ability to worship and engage in cultural/social activities, hygiene and health, and ability to fulfil material needs.

### 7.3. Education

A good number of interviewed children associated happy moments with being promoted to the next class or scoring good grades. Belete, for example, said:

*Beth: What things/issues make you happy?*

*Belete: ...At school, I become very happy when I get good results. You know at school all my friends are very good [students] and we become happy when we get good results after studying hard.*

Alemu's drawing of "Things/people/places which I like at my school", figure 23 below, also reflected this.

Figure 19: Thematic drawing by a 14-year-old boy of "the day I receive a report card from school". "I am very happy". "It is one of the things which make me happy because it is the day when I see the fruit of my effort"



When I asked them what is most important in their life now, almost all the children said “education”. Some of the children such as Endalk, a 12 year old boy, mentioned “education” or “going to school” as something children of their age need to survive and put it on the same level with what he called “basic needs” i.e. food, water and shelter. The children explained the importance of education in their lives in different ways. Nevertheless, the most common explanation was that education is important to “get a job”, to “reach a big place” or “good position” in the future. In response to my question about what is most important in her life now, Senayte, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade<sup>23</sup> student, for example replied:

*Senayte: Education. If you do not go to school, you will not get anything.*

*Beth: Can you please explain that to me?*

*Senayte: You cannot get a job [in the future] and if you do not work, it is difficult to survive.*

Solomon, an 8th grade student, in his response to same question, shared her remark:

*Solomon: Education.*

*Beth: Why is education most important in your life now?*

*Solomon: That is because people reach big places (such as having a secure job with good salary) by learning. To reach a big place what is most important in my life is education.*

Eleni, a 12-year-old girl, who was a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student whose mother was killed during the recent elections, even went to the extent of saying “for me education is very important even when I compared it with my mother and father [having parents]”.

To some extent, I think, two things influenced the children’s attitude towards education. First, in recent years, government and non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia have been working hard to raise the awareness of people towards education. For example, in relation to girls’ education, nowadays it is very common in Ethiopia to hear and read messages like “teaching girls means teaching society” on the radio, television and newspapers. Therefore, there is a possibility that the children were just echoing these messages. Second, my presence as an educated Ethiopian woman might have affected their attitude and the issues that they told me about their attitude towards education. That is, my presence might have motivated them particularly because I might appear “privileged” in their eyes (e.g. by studying in the UK) or they might have told me what they thought would make me happy because I used to encourage them with their education.

The children also mentioned the importance of success at school or being a good student in terms of making parents proud and as a result being happy:

*Beth: Tell me about what is most important in your life now.*

*Mamitu: The most important thing for me is my education. I want to reach a good position through my education. My parents also want this. It is nice when people say the child of so and so is a graduate. Your parents will be proud of you and this makes you happy.*

Apart from helping to reach “a good position” and make parents proud, Mamitu’s quote above suggests that children’s educational performance also reflects on parents’ status in the community (“it is nice when people say the child of so and so is a graduate”).

Being a good student was also one of the criteria used by the children for choosing their friends. This was not only because the children considered associating with good students as one way of being a good student themselves (since good students encourage the children to study and help them with their studying) but also because, as Rahwa described below, “everybody” including neighbours “like” good students:

*Beth: What kind of life do you aspire to have?*

*Rahwa: I would be happy if I could be a good student. If I become good with my education everybody may like me but if I am a lazy student everyone will say that I am a lazy girl and do not care about my education. For this reason, I want to be a good student.*

As described in chapter 5, how the children are perceived by neighbours was important for their relationship with friends and peers.

Despite the children’s emphasis on success at school, most of them, however, had very little chance of succeeding in their education. Almost all of them go to Government schools<sup>24</sup> and due to a combination of factors including large class sizes, extreme shortage of school resources (like textbooks) and unmotivated teachers (because of low salary and large class sizes), these schools provide very poor quality of education (Poluha, 2004). Most of the children also said they do not get support from parents/caregivers in terms of their education. Some of them (particularly those who lived with caregivers) even said they do not have time to study. Lack of support from parents/caretakers was, I think, the main reason for most of these children’s poor educational performance because those children

who got support and encouragement from parents scored good grades despite attending Government schools and the limited time they had for study.

#### **7.4. Working**

Contrary to much of the literature on child wellbeing (see Woodhead, 1999b, 2004; Nieuwenhuys, 1994, 1996; Reynolds, 1991 for exceptions), many children saw “working” as having a positive influence on their wellbeing. Nevertheless, what was understood as “work” and the way “working” has a positive influence on wellbeing was conceived differently by different children. When I asked him what he thinks children of his age need to be happy in their life, Mulatu, a 13 year old boy, said “even working makes them happy” because:

*Mulatu: ...If they do not work [...] they will be idle [and] they will spend their time in undesirable places. That means they will not be comfortable and happy....*

His remark that “even” working makes children happy suggests that being happy because of working is not a common experience. His remark that children who do not work will spend their time in undesirable places may be related to the fact that there were few recreational facilities in the area. If children do not work and make themselves busy, Mulatu was saying, there is nothing that they can do except spend their time in undesirable places, which often meant gambling (playing table football with money), or going to Video houses. Spending time in undesirable places, as described in earlier sections, was something parents, neighbours and peers disapprove of and it could spoil the children’s relationship with these categorise of people. When Mulatu talked about “working”, he was referring to work outside the home. Like many of the children I interviewed, Mulatu did not talk about his contribution at home unless I asked him direct questions about it (something Pamela Reynolds (1991) has also observed in her study of child labour in the Zambezi). This was, I think, because many of the children including him considered their contribution at home as something natural rather than “work” and as a result they did not reflect upon it. Many of the boys contributed at home in terms of running errands while the girls’ contribution included cleaning the house, washing dishes, preparing food and taking care of younger siblings.



For many of the children working outside the home was seen as a source of happiness because it enabled them to support themselves and their family. Dino, a 12-year-old boy, lived in a male-absent single-parent family. During school vacation, he worked as a shoe shiner<sup>25</sup> around a nearby market place and sometimes carried goods to support himself and his family. He noted:

*Beth: Tell me about your significant achievements*

*Dino: Last year I was able to save money and buy clothes after working as a shoeshine. I was very happy for being able to do that.*

Almost half of the 26 children I interviewed (i.e. 11 boys and 1 girl) did part-time jobs during school vacation. Their jobs included selling food items and firewood near their houses or in the market place, working in a Garage, in their caregiver's metal workshop, as a *Listro* (shoeshine), as a *Weyala*<sup>26</sup> (taxi assistant/ conductor) and fetching water for payment for merchants in the nearby market. During the second phase of my fieldwork, one of the girls started to work as a full-time housemaid. Apart from two boys (twins) who worked for the metal workshop without any financial reward, all these children used the money they gained from working to support themselves and their family. Apart from directly contributing to their families' income, most of them bought their own food and clothing, and covered small expenses such as fees for neighbourhood football team.

For some of the children such as Hezera doing part-time jobs was also a way of learning skills, which they saw as important for future success:

*Beth: Tell me about main hopes that you have now.*

*Hezera: My hope now is to get a job during the school vacation. If I do not attend school during the rainy season [school vacation], I want to work. Working in a Garage, for example, is useful for me. It is mechanic [a skill]. When I grow up, I would be happy if I could open my own Garage.*

Hezera and Melese also perceived working as “being healthy” and in response to my question about what they and children of their age need to keep themselves healthy they explained what they meant by that:

*I used to think, and used to hear from many people including my friends, that money is important for being healthy. My friends say if you have money, you can be healthy because you can sit and eat without working. However [now] I do not think that that*

*is right. If you work, you will be healthy. If you work you can change your family's situation and you can change your country's situation....*

Hezera, a 12-year-old boy

*To be healthy they need [...] working hard... to be healthy, I am now working shoe shining. After doing shoe shining, I carry potatoes for my sister [who sells boiled potatoes on the street] and at the same time, I peel it for her.*

Melese, a 13-year-old boy

It appears that these children perceived “working” as a legitimate or healthy way to a better life. Hezera’s comment that it is not money that matters for being healthy but working seems to suggest that money which is acquired without working is not good but if you earn money by working and change your family’s and country’s situation that is healthy. Melese’s quote also seems to suggest a similar message. In a way, this means that work is seen as both a source of physical and mental health in itself and a way to access resources to preserve health. Demonstrating the emphasis that these children put on “working” as a means to success, when I asked her what she thinks children of her age need to be successful in their life, Mamitu also noted:

*In order to be successful they have to work. If they worked hard without despising any job they would be successful*

Her remark that children should not despise any kind of job is also reflected in an Amharic saying, which literally translated, as “work is respectful”.

### **7.5. Ability to Worship and Engage in Cultural/Social Activities**

Some of the children (both Christians and Muslims) have mentioned being able to go to the church or mosque as a source of happiness. When I asked her what is most important in her life now, Eleni, a follower of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, for example, replied, “Listening to the words of God and praying. I [also] become very happy when I fast<sup>27</sup>”. During my second phase of fieldwork, the school which most of my informants went to (i.e. Kolfe Elementary School) was upgraded into a secondary school by the government and its students were distributed into different elementary schools. In response to my question about whether they are happy about the school change, almost all of these children replied they are not happy about it because they are forced to separate from their school friends. However, Nuru, a Muslim, said he is happy about it because the new school is near to a

mosque and he can go to the mosque in his way to and back from school. When I asked him about how happy he is with his life he also noted:

*Nuru: Sometimes I am happy and sometimes I am not.*

*Beth: Can you please explain that to me?*

*Nuru: That is because [sometimes] I would be very unhappy if I could not go to Quran bet [the mosque]. Of all the things, I would be very unhappy if I could not go to Quran bet.*

Twenty-two of the twenty-six children interviewed belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There were also two Protestants and two Muslims. Fourteen of the children said they go to the Church or Mosque at least two times a week (11 Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, 2 Protestants and 1 Muslim). Five of these 14 children said they go to the Church or Mosque every day (4 Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and 1 Muslim).

From the children's accounts, it is also clear that apart from the spiritual value, going to the church was useful for these children in terms of creating an opportunity to interact with their friends, particularly for the children who were followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Most of these children went to the church with friends whom they called "church friends". Some of them (two girls- Senayte and Eleni, and a boy-Endalk) were members of different *ye bête Christian Mahiber* (literally an association for house of Christians/a Church). Two of the associations (which Senayte and Eleni were members) were single sex (girls) and the other (which Endalk belonged to) had both boys and girls. In terms of age, all of the three associations had younger, older children and peers as members. Every month during Saint Mary's day which is the first day of every month the girls in the two girls' associations took turns to prepare a feast (Homemade bread, *qolo* (Roasted grain e.g. peas, beans, barley, wheat etc), water and soft drinks). They sang different religious songs together and sometimes invited adult men who preached from the Bible. In the case of the religious association, which Endalk belonged to, a feast was prepared on Holy Trinity day, which is the seventh day of every month, but the process was the same in all the two associations.

Some of these children's accounts also suggest that sometimes the children used "going to the church" as an excuse to go out of the house and do other things such as visiting a friend. This strategy appears to be used mainly by the girls since parents controlled the

movement of girls more strictly than they controlled boys as described in chapter 5. Etenu, a 13-year-old girl, for example, said:

*Beth: Do you feel that your parent(s) know a lot about you?*

*Etenu: There are things, which they do know [about me].*

*Beth: Can you please explain that?*

*Etenu: for instance, sometimes I go to my friend's house instead of the church. Unless I tell them that, they do not know whether I go to the church or other places.*

*Beth: Do you always go to the church?*

*Etenu: Yes, I go to the church every day to attend the 5 o'clock preaching....*

Given the fact that there were very few recreational facilities in the research area, it would be fair to assume that for some of the children going to the church or mosque served as a potential source of fun and enjoyment.

Apart from going to the church/mosque, being able to celebrate holidays with family, friends and neighbours was mentioned by many of the children as a reason for happiness. When I asked them about the happy times that they remember many of the children related them to the holidays that they celebrated with family, friends and neighbours:

*Eleni: The day I was very happy was on Meskel [festival/holiday around end of September]. My mother was alive. She prepared coffee and Difo [baked bread] and invited neighbours. They [parents and neighbours] chat and eat together. My mother also gave me money. I was very happy that day.*

A 12-year-old girl

*Habtu: Often, I am very happy during holidays [...]. For example, last Christmas I was very happy. All family members get together and celebrate the holiday chatting and eating together. In the afternoon I celebrated [the holiday] with my friends.*

A 13-year-old boy

Generally, holidays were an important source of happiness for most of the children. This might be because during holidays, people tend to interact with each other positively (people tend to be in a jovial mood). Moreover, holidays mean that children would enjoy better food in terms of both quality and quantity and sometimes receive gifts of new clothing or money. Yet, for some children particularly for those who have recently lost one or both of their parents, holidays brought distress and depression. Memories of happy holidays shared with the deceased parent(s) caused a lot of anguish and suffering, as did the visible absence of the gifts often expected on these occasions.

## 7.6. Hygiene and Health

A good number of the children interviewed also mentioned cleanliness, particularly clean houses and surroundings, as a source of happiness. When I asked him about the things/issues that make him happy, Dino who works as a shoeshine, for example, said:

*At home, I become happy when the house is clean. When you come home to rest, you will be happy if you find everything clean...*

In his response to same question, Bereket who lived with a caregiver and older sister also noted:

*Bereket: What makes me happy is I am happy that the house is repaired and the other is when the house becomes clean and looks nice I become happy.*

*Beth: What other things/issues make you happy?*

*Bereket: The other thing that makes me happy is when the compound becomes clean...*

This point also emerged in the children's drawings (see, for instance, figure 24 below). Of the 18 (12 boys and 6 girls) children who were asked to draw pictures about "Things/places/issues they like in their neighbourhood" 6 (four girls and two boys) drew "clean surrounding with trees and flowers". For many of the children cleanliness was associated with health. When I asked them "what does being healthy mean to you", almost all them responded, "living in a clean house and surrounding". The argument put forward by many of them was if someone keeps their hygiene and lived in a clean house and surrounding, she cannot suffer from any diseases.

Despite the children's emphasis on cleanliness, all of them, however, lived in houses and neighbourhoods, which were characterized by poor hygiene. It is also possible that they emphasised cleanliness because they lived in unclean houses and neighbourhoods. Almost all of them lived in houses, which lacked an adequate supply of water, sanitation, and drainage. Most of these houses also had communal pit latrines that were very unclean. Some of the children's houses even did not have a toilet. I was told that residents use the open space. Open sewers, poor drainage, and piles of refuse characterized their neighbourhoods. Mainly because of the difficulty of playing outside the home (for lack of playing fields, open sewers etc), when I asked them what kind of life they aspire to have most of the children emphasised the importance of having a house which has a compound.

At school, classrooms were also very untidy. Apart from having dust floors, the children said, classrooms have bad smells because some children excrete inside them. According to the children, this is because school toilets are very unclean and above all cannot accommodate large number of students.

Figure 20: Thematic drawing by a 12-year-old girl of “clean surrounding with trees and flowers”



However, most of the children tried their best to keep themselves, their houses, surroundings and school clean. When I asked the children when and where they bathed, the majority of them said they take a bath once a week or a fortnight. Typically, baths took place on a metal washbasin out in the open or indoors. They changed clothes after a similar interval of time, mainly because they had hardly any spare clothing. At home, the children (mainly the girls) were responsible for cleaning and organizing their houses. At school, the children took turns to clean their classrooms at the end of school hours almost every month. Some of the children told me that they and their peers in the neighbourhood organize themselves to clean their surroundings.

### **7.7. Ability to Fulfil Material Needs**

Some of the children expressed happiness in terms of being able to fulfil material needs such as clothing and food. In response to my question about what things/issues make him

happy Melese, a 13 year old boy, who worked as a shoe shiner and could only afford to buy food once a day, for example, replied: “when I am hungry and I ask [my mother] for food if I am given I will be happy”. In response to same question, Mulatu noted:

*Mulatu: When something is bought for me I become happy. For example, if shoes or clothes are bought for me I become happy.*

*Beth: What other things make you happy?*

*Mulatu: At home [I become happy] when something is bought, for example, [I was happy] when a radio was bought. It [the one we used to have] was old. When a clock was bought I was very happy. When a cloth is bought, even for my sister, I become happy.*

Some of them also mentioned “having a television at home” as what they and children of their age need to be happy with their life. For many of the interviewed children being bought clothing and being given money (by family members and neighbours) during holidays (such as New Year’s Day, Christmas, Easter etc) were also reasons for happiness.

## **7.8. Discussion**

Are the ‘positive influences’ and ‘protective factors’ identified by the children different from those identified in the literature? In the children’s accounts, six factors emerged in relation to ‘positive influences’ on their wellbeing, mainly in response to my question about what makes them happy. These were good relationships with family members (both with the children and among each other), friends, peers and neighbours, education, working, ability to worship and engage in cultural/social activities, hygiene and health, and ability to fulfil material needs. Whilst all these factors in one way or another positively affected the children’s wellbeing, in many of the children’s accounts good relationships emerged as the most important ‘positive influences’ for wellbeing. This finding generally reflects the ‘positive influences’ identified by Woodhead (2004) in relation to the psychosocial wellbeing of working children in poverty settings, as indicated in the following table.

Table 7: Major positive influences on psychosocial well-being associated with work (from Woodhead, 2004: 338)

No.	Influences on wellbeing	Major positive influences
1.	<b>Secure relationships and consistent settings</b>	Stable environment, predictable routines. Changes occur in context of supportive relationships
2.	<b>Activities and guidance</b>	Progressive participation in socially valued activities, skills and responsibilities under sensitive consistent guidance
3.	<b>Responsible adults</b>	Positive, consistent and considerate treatment, respectful of children's integrity
4.	<b>Peer support and solidarity</b>	Opportunities for positive peer relations and mutual support
5.	<b>Physical environment and daily schedules</b>	Safe, healthy environment with appropriate balance of work, learning, play and rest
6.	<b>'Contact' with employers</b>	Appropriately regulated situation with adequate protections
7.	<b>Work and family lives</b>	Expected contributions respectful of children's interests and wellbeing
8.	<b>Other factors affecting the impact of work</b>	Positive opportunities for participation in school and other community settings basic economic and social security, political stability and social justice

Of the eight 'positive influences' identified by the author five of them are, in one way or another, related to the children's relationships: "Secure relationships and consistent settings"; "Responsible adults", "Peer support and solidarity", "'Contact' with employers" and "work and family lives".

With respect to good relationships, many of the children who lived in two-parent and in male-absent single-parent families identified good relationships with their mothers as an important reason for their happiness whereas those who lived with caregivers emphasised the importance of their relationship with older siblings. Nevertheless, older siblings were also mentioned as an important source of emotional and moral support for the children who lived in single parent and two-parent families, particularly in families where there were irresponsible fathers. Good relationships with friends, peers and neighbours were mentioned as important reasons for happiness for the children from all types of families. The importance of good relationships with friends and peers for poor children's wellbeing



is also well documented in many of the qualitative studies on children in poverty (e.g. Backett-Milburn et al., 2003; Percy, 2003; Ridge, 2002; Morrow, 2001; Willow, 2002).

In the accounts of the children who were able to cope successfully in the face of risks, good relationship with family members, friends and neighbours also emerged as major external protective factors. Having a good relationship with either one or two of their parents helped some of the children who experienced frequent conflict between parents to buffer the negative effects of this experience and even to prevent its occurrence. In relation to poverty, the protective role of supportive family relationships particularly good relationships with mothers for children in terms of mitigating the impact of poverty is well documented in many qualitative studies on children in poverty (Daly and Leonard, 2002; Percy, 2003; Morrow, 2001; Roker, 1998; Backett-Milburn et al., 2003; Ridge, 2002; Willow, 2002).

Having good relationships with older siblings helped some of the children who experienced mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers to cope well when faced with mistreatment. Having good relationships with friends and neighbours and thus getting emotional and material support from them helped some of the children who faced different risks (such as inability to fulfil material needs and conflict with parents) to cope well in the face of these risks. The kinds of coping strategies the children used in response to risks, therefore, were influenced by the children's access to protective factors. That is, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts were those who reported having access to protective factors and the children who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective were those who reported not having access to protective factors.

The factors that affected the children's wellbeing positively ('positive influences') and those that helped some of the children to buffer the negative effects of risks and even to prevent their initial occurrence ('protective factors') were related. 'Positive influences' emerged as broad including factors such as good relationships, education and working, whilst 'protective factors' only indicated good relationships. Thus, 'protective factors' can be conceptualized as being contained inside 'positive influences'.

Unlike much of the resilience literature which proceeds from an assumption that external protective factors are totally independent of children's behaviours and actions (see chapter 3), the children's accounts also suggest that there were certain "rules" that they had to

respect in order to have access to external protective factors such as good relationships with family members, friends and neighbours. Obedience and respect were the “rules” that the children had to follow in order to have good relationship with parents and neighbours, and to have good relationships with friends “being there for each other” was important.

## **7.9. Conclusion**

In the accounts of interviewed children, ‘positive influences’ and ‘protective factors’ for wellbeing emerged as related. That is to say both in terms of affecting their wellbeing positively (‘positive influences’) and helping them to buffer the negative effects of risks and to prevent their initial occurrence (‘protective factors’), the children’s good relationships with parents, older siblings, friends, peers and neighbours emerged as most important. Other ‘positive influences’ included education, working, ability to worship and engage in cultural/social activities, hygiene and health, and ability to fulfil material needs. In terms of protective factors, two major points also emerged in the children’s accounts. First, protective factors served as a mediating factor in the relation between risks and the children’s coping strategies. Second, external protective factors were dependent on the children’s behaviours and actions. Based on these findings, the following chapter in detail compares the lives of the children who used effective coping strategies in response to what they identified as risks with those who experienced similar risks but who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts.

## **Chapter 8: Resilience among Poor Children in Addis Ababa: Case Studies**

### **8.1. Introduction**

My objective in this chapter is to use case studies to explore how and why interviewed children selected particular coping strategies and how these in turn produced particular outcomes. In so doing, I look at possible reasons why some of the children used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts while others who experienced similar risks used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts. I pursue this task by comparing the lives of five children particularly in terms of the protective factors (e.g. good relationships with family members, friends, peers and neighbours) and resources (e.g. personal characteristics) I identified in chapter 6 and 7, which were available to each of them. As I argued in chapter 6 and 7 respectively, personal and environmental resources, and protective factors influenced the children's coping strategies. The children's coping strategies then mediated the relationship between risks and their impact on their sense of wellbeing.

The first part of the case studies compares the lives of Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu. Mulatu, a thirteen-year-old boy, lived with his parents and a younger sister. In response to risks such as conflict between and with his parents, and teasing by his peers, he used coping strategies that emerged as effective in his accounts. Endalk, a twelve-year-old boy, lived with his parents and three siblings. In response to similar risks, he used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in his accounts. Mamitu, a thirteen-year-old girl, lived with her parents and four siblings. In response to one of the risks, which she experienced in common with Mulatu and Endalk (i.e. conflict between her parents) she used coping strategies that emerged as effective in her accounts. The second part of the case studies compares the lives of Hezera and Bereket. Hezera, an eleven-year-old boy, lived with his maternal uncles and an older sister. In response to mistreatment at the hands of his caregivers and teasing by his peers, he employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in his accounts. Bereket, a twelve-year-old boy, lived with his maternal uncles and older sister. In response to similar risks, he employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in his accounts.

The chapter has three major sections: case studies, summary and discussion. In the case studies section, drawing on data from individual interviews with the five children, their diaries and timelines I start by presenting their stories in terms of the protective factors and resources available to each of them. Then, I analyse their stories in terms of the risks that they experienced in common, their coping strategies and the efficacy of these strategies, and the influence of protective factors and resources on their coping strategies. In the second section, I summarize the common features of the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts. In the third section, I discuss the findings of this study in light of what we know so far from research on children's resilience.

## **8.2. Case Studies**

### **8.2.1. Children who faced conflict between and with parents, and teasing by their peers**

#### ***Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu***

The lives of Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu were comparable mainly because they faced at least one risk in common but they coped differently. Their accounts also suggest that the efficacy of their coping strategies differed. What is more, they all had a number of characteristics in common. They were nearly the same age. All were living in two-parent families. All came from families, which had a similar economic status (and as a result, all got the same kind of material support from Tesfa Social and Development Association<sup>28</sup>). All were Grade 7 students at a government elementary school and all were followers of Ethiopia Orthodox Church, as indicated in the following table.

Table 8: Biographical information about Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu

Characteristic	Mulatu	Endalk	Mamitu
Age	13	12	13
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Type of family	Two-parent	Two-parent	Two-parent
Educational status	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7
Family size	Four	Six	Seven
Major source of income	Mother who sold fuel and earned approximately 50 birr a month.	Mother who sold local alcoholic drinks and earned approximately 200 birr a month.	Mother who sold <i>Injera</i> and earned approximately 60 birr a month
Type of support from Tesfa Social and Development Association	Exercise books, a bag, a school uniform and a casual dress once a year	Same type of support	Same type of support
Religion	Ethiopian Orthodox Christian	Ethiopia Orthodox Christian	Ethiopian Orthodox Christian

### Case 1: Mulatu

Mulatu was a thirteen-year-old boy. He was a seventh grade student at a government elementary school. He lived in a single room *Kebele house*<sup>29</sup> with his parents and an eight-year-old sister. His mother, the major source of income for the family, made a living out of selling charcoal, sedge and firewood near their house and sometimes on the street near the market place and earned approximately 50 birr a month. Mulatu and his younger sister helped sell these items whenever their mother was busy with domestic work and ill<sup>30</sup>. His father worked in a “*shay bet*” (Cafeteria) and earned 120 birr a month. However, he supported the family infrequently. Mulatu got material support (exercise books, a bag, a school uniform and a casual dress) from Tesfa Social and Development Association once a year.

Mulatu felt that he has a good relationship with all his family members. In describing his relationship with his parents he said, “I get parental love fully. I am very close with my mother and father”. He said his parents always try their best to make him happy and “even when they make me sad they want to compensate by doing something [good] for me”. Despite the fact that his father did not often contribute money to the family and was not that much involved in his children’s lives, Mulatu was very sympathetic towards him. “Although because of financial constraints my father does not buy me expensive school books”, he noted, “He buys what he can and sends me to school and follows up my education. Maybe because we [children in the family] are small [in number] he has good

love for me”. His father came home late at night<sup>31</sup> and it was difficult for Mulatu to meet him before he went to bed. Nevertheless, he tried his best to keep in touch with his father during daytime: “Even when my mother doesn’t send me on errands [to my father’s work place] I go [there] just to say hi to him... Sometimes I wait for him while doing my studying”. Mulatu also supported his father in whatever way he can:

*Beth: How do you support your family?*

*Mulatu: ...let me start from my father, on Fridays I know that he washes the Veranda [at his work place] so I go [there] early and help him by fetching water and with the washing. I also run errands. I go and pay Idir [burial association] payment. In the past, he used to go and pay by himself. However, when he went to the Idir payment place he became late for his work. Therefore, he showed me the place and I started to go and pay for him...*

Mulatu said he is particularly very close with his mother, whom he described as “If she does not have money she will borrow to feed me even if she herself does not eat”. When I asked him to describe his closeness with his mother, he said, “We discuss things. For example, when we [the family] decided to sell charcoal she first discussed it with me. She asked me whether it is possible [to start the business]; whether I would help her with the selling. If I also face difficult things I will tell her and seek her advice”. Mulatu also said his mother gives him “good love”, takes care of him “very well” and “because my father does not spend his time at home she makes sure that I study”. Mulatu’s mother was illiterate. She grew up in a rural area where she was given in marriage at an early age. However, although she herself did not get the opportunity to go to school, she valued her children’s education very much. Mulatu said “If I showed her one exam paper she would say ‘*Berta, Gobez*’ [be strong, Excellent] and sometimes she adds to the amount of bread she gives to me”. Mulatu assisted his mother with domestic work (such as washing dishes and cleaning the house), obeyed and respected her “very much”:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in relation to obedience*

*Mulatu: I am obedient, most of the time, I am obedient to her [my mother]. I obey her when she sends me on errands or tells me to go to places with her. In fact, I do things without her instructions. When she asks me to go with her [to the market place], I do not let her to carry things, I offer to help.*

Mulatu's relationship with his mother was not, however, without conflict. "Maybe because I interact with her every day", Mulatu noted, "Sometimes I quarrel with her". In his diary, during August 2006, he described one such incident:

*"..I went to a football field to play football with my friend. When I came home, I quarrelled with my mother. When I asked her to give me lunch, she said 'you went around and just came back for lunch'.... I knew she was angry with me. Therefore, I just keep silent and remain calm. When my mother gets angry at me or when I get angry at her I remember what my father told me. He told me to be patient..."*

In writing about his feelings on the same day, Mulatu went on to say, "Today is a very ugly day. But I think the day is okay except that my mother makes me angry". It appears that Mulatu was angry with his mother because from his point of view he did not do anything wrong. He said he went to play with his friend after completing his task at home. He thought that his mother got angry with him just because she was in a bad mood.

Despite the fact that it only happened occasionally, conflict with his mother affected Mulatu's emotional wellbeing greatly. For example, when I asked him whether he gets depressed or not he replied, "Sometimes I get depressed. I become very depressed when I quarrel with my mother since there is nobody here that I can talk to..." Again, on another occasion he talked about his unhappy memories in relation to the day he quarrelled with his mother (chapter 5, page 97).

Mulatu talked positively about his relationship with his younger sister. In describing his relationship with her, he said although sometimes she makes me "very sad" by insulting me, she "cares about me". "Sometimes if I don't have enough breakfast she gives me her share...When I don't have pen or paper she gives me hers".

At home, the major source of worry for Mulatu was conflict between his parents. When I asked him about the issues that worry him, he said, "If my mother and father fight I become worried very quickly until they make peace". On another occasion, he also said, "I do not worry except when my parents fight. When my parents fight I worry [a lot]". In the timeline I asked him to do based on six themes<sup>32</sup>(see chapter 4, for more on this), Mulatu also described conflict between his parents as the thing that worried him most:

Table 9: Timeline of Mulatu

Theme	Year	Happening
“The times I worried most”	1994 EC	I was very worried when my mother and father fought and when my father decided to take me to his relatives’ house in a rural area
	1998 EC	When my mother and father fought

(See his full timeline in appendix 3)

When I asked Mulatu what he does when his parents fight, he said, “I reconciled them a couple of times” (see his full quote in chapter 6, page 129). In another occasion he cited this as his significant achievement (see his quote on page 131) and a source of happiness (see his quote on page 131).

Mulatu felt that he has a reciprocated friendship and a positive relationship with his peers. He reported that he and his friends support each other with work (both paid and unpaid), play, study and go to places together (especially during holidays such as Christmas and New Year). He said, “We have a lot of visions [of the future] together” (such as studying hard and going to college). In response to my question about whether he has friends who will stand by him during difficult times, Mulatu also said, “Yes I have. My close friend Samson will support me. In addition to him my [other] neighbourhood friends will also support me” and said he also does the same for them. Mulatu had a positive attitude about his friends’ view about him:

*Beth: What do you think is your friends’ view about you?*

*Mulatu: They have a good view about me. Because I always say ok when people send me on errands and I respect people they say good things about me. It is the same with my friend Samson. Because I am good to him, he is also good to me. However, if I am not good to him, he will not be good to me; from this, I also understand that I am good.*

In talking about his relationship with his peers, Mulatu noted, “I get along well with children in this area. They like me...” (See his full quote in chapter 7, page 183). He said he is happy about the cooperation he gets from them: “For example, once I was sick and they all came to visit me. I was very happy. We also do things together. For instance, last time when my parents renovated our house they all came to help us. We also do the same if



something similar happened in one of the children's houses". Although Mulatu enjoyed the cooperation and the society of his peers, his account suggests that there were aspects of his relationship with his peers, which he was not happy about, particularly the experience of exclusion:

*Beth: of aspects of your current life, are there aspects, which are difficult to be happy about?*

*Mulatu: ... in relation to my friends [in the neighbourhood] sometimes there are some aspects, which I am not happy about. For example, when I quarrel [with them], if we quarrel and we do not talk to each other often it is difficult for me to make peace with them again. If they quarrel, they hold grudges against you until they see something on your hands. When that happens, it is very difficult to make peace with them. After making peace [with them] they will quarrel [with me] again. One cannot predict their actions.*

When I asked Mulatu why it is difficult to make peace with them again, he said, "for example, today if I have money in my hands those who quarrel with me will make peace with me. They will be with me until my money is finished and then they will go to another child [who has money]. [Then] they will treat me as if I was not their friend at least at one time". Apart from the experience of exclusion, as his account above suggest, Mulatu also faced teasing from his peers in the neighbourhood. However, he said, "When they tease me or try to make me angry while playing I remain patient. I tell them to stop. I do not fight with them for this reason".

Mulatu had a good relationship with his neighbours. He said, "I am very obedient to my neighbours. For that reason, they like me very much...they treat me as one of their children. I ate and slept at their place". He reported that his neighbours also provided him with emotional support, advice him and "they shower blessings on me and I am happy for that".

Mulatu described himself as "I have a good character" which, he said, means, "if he [a child] obeys his mother and father and if he obeys his friends and neighbours we say he has a good character. And also if he gets along with his friends, if he is good with his education we say he has a good character". In terms of managing his temper, Mulatu said, "I am not bad-tempered. I am very patient". Even when I quarrel with my parents, friends and peers, he noted, I prefer to remain calm. He said the following about his behaviour in terms of being outgoing:

*Mulatu: I socialize with people very quickly. If a child comes even from a rural area, we become friends in one day. We play football together. We become close friends. I have the ability of getting along with people. I am very close with people. Because I get along well with people, I have many friends in this neighbourhood. Wherever we [my friends and I] go to play football, I organize the team and make them to play together [peacefully].*

Like his description of his behaviour (such as “I have a good character” and “I have the ability of getting along with people”) and his description of his relationship with other people (such as “I get along well with children in this area. They like me” and “I am very obedient to my neighbours. They like me very much”), the way Mulatu talked about his educational performance suggests that he had a positive self-concept and confidence:

*Beth: Tell me about your educational performance*

*Mulatu: I am average in terms of my educational performance. Because I do a lot of work, I do not study much. [However] even if I do not study much I do study a bit, even when I study a bit I get good results. Because there is no one here [who helps my mother with work], I work...I will improve [it] in the future and I am improving it.*

## **Case 2: Endalk**

Endalk, the youngest boy in his family, was twelve year old. He was a seventh grade student at a government elementary school. He lived in a single room *Kebele house* with his parents, a brother and two sisters. His father was paralyzed and had been confined to bed since three years before I met him. His mother, the major source of income for the family, sold *Areqie* and *Tella* (local alcoholic drinks) at home for a living and earned approximately 200 birr a month. During school vacation, Endalk worked for an auto-mechanic as an assistant and his older brother worked as a daily labourer (washing cars for payment) and covered some of their expenses (such as clothes). During my second phase of fieldwork, his older sister left for Beirut to work as a housemaid and started to support the family financially, and Endalk left his parents house to live with his older brother who lived in another area.

Endalk felt that he does not have a good relationship with his family members, saying, “If I become happy they will get sick”. He felt that his family members do not want him to be happy and do not fulfil his wishes. He said he would be happy if he could spend the day with family members “with love, without quarrelling with them” and if he could work “without them insulting or saying anything [bad]”. In talking about his parents, he said,

“they do not always give me love and care”. He also felt that his mother discriminates against him in favour of his siblings. On his diary on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2006, he, for example, wrote the following about her:

*“...To tell the truth I like my mother. But she sees me not as her son rather as a step son. She is controlled by Dershayee [my older sister] or Haymanot [my younger sister]...”*

He said his father hits him, “every night he makes me cry”, he gets drunk, disturbs the house and consequently at one time he was forced to leave his parents house to live with his maternal uncle (see his full quote in chapter 6, page 134). Endalk also said his parents do not encourage him in his education (for example in terms of buying the necessary school materials). When I asked him to tell me about his current worries he replied: “For example, I am worried now because I lost one of my books. If I do not buy another one, I will not get my report card. Nevertheless, nobody here will buy it for me. Actually, I am afraid to tell them about it because they will hit me”. He also felt he does not play freely “like other children” because his family members (particularly his mother and older sister) always tell him to do something whenever he goes outside to play.

Endalk also characterized his relationship with his older sister as negative. He said she “shows a lot of ill will” towards him:

*Beth: What makes you angry?*

*Endalk: ...She [my older sister] is quick to oppose anything that she thinks will benefit me. If, for instance, I beg our mother to buy me a ball, you know the small one that costs only five birr; Dirshaye [my older sister] will be quick to remark ‘do you think we are so rich that [would waste money on such things]?’ I know that my mother would not buy things like that for me, but Dirshaye is very active in discouraging her. Yet, when it comes to something that she wants, she always gets her way. No one can stop her. If she finds clothing or shoes that, she fancies she manages to get our mother to buy it for her. If I dare ask our mother to buy me clothing or shoes our mother herself yells at me. I resent all of this. I get so angry sometimes that I refuse to eat. This does not bother Dirshaye at all; in fact, she would also tell our mother not to bother.*

Endalk felt that his older sister is “jealous” about his situation and does not want him to have a peaceful relationship with the rest of the family and to associate with neighbours. At one time, he noted, he was even forced to run away from home because she threatened him

with breaking his leg if he goes to one of his neighbours' houses and "I was also very angry at my mother that day" (see his full quote in chapter 6, pp. 134-135).

In addition to the resentment, he had against his older sister, Endalk said, "at home I get angry because of my younger sister". He felt that his younger sister does not respect him as much as she respects other family members: "When I tell her to do something if she becomes too slow I will rebuke her or hit her slightly and then she will cry. But she will not cry if they [other family members] hit her". Endalk did not interact much with his older brother who spent most of his time outside home.

Endalk reported that he helps his mother and older sister with domestic work such as cleaning the house, making coffee and washing dishes. Apart from his mother, he said, he is the only person who takes care of his paralyzed father: he helps him change his cloth, go outside to take fresh air and clean himself. However, he felt that his contribution to the family is not reciprocated in terms of love, care and follow up from family members. Nevertheless, Endalk's account suggests that he was not always obedient to his parents, older siblings and neighbours. When I asked him whether he is obedient or not, he replied, "I disobey [but] sometimes I obey when they [family members] make me happy". In response to the same question regarding neighbours, he said, "I obey my neighbours because they have TV but if they [my parents] buy TV I will not run errands for them".

At home, a major source of worry for Endalk was conflict between his parents. He said he worry that when his parents fight his mother might lose all her patience and would strangle his father (see his full quote in chapter 5, page 93). He also talked at length about how conflict between parents could be damaging for children's emotional wellbeing because "the children will be worried" (see his full quote in chapter 5, page 92). In the timeline I asked him to do, Endalk also described conflict between his parents as the thing that worried him most:

Table 10: Timeline of Endalk

Theme	Year	Happening
“The times I worried most”	1992 EC	When my father was drunk, when he came home and fought with my mother. She told to the police and he was imprisoned for three days.
	1993 EC	Again, my father disturbed the house, fought with my mother and he was imprisoned for two days; this year another day, he was also imprisoned for disturbing the house for 24 hours.
	1999 EC (this year)	My mother and father fought

(See his full timeline in appendix 4)

When I asked Endalk what he does when his parents fight, he said, “Because she [my mother] is very patient I say [to myself] they would stop [fighting] before it gets worse”.

Endalk felt that his friendship is not reciprocated. In response to my question about whether he has friends who will stand by him during difficult times, he said, “there is no one. Nobody is serious. For example, if I fall down there is no one who comes to help me. They rather laugh at me”. However, he said, he always stands by his friends’ side (for example in terms of visiting them at their house when they get ill). He also felt that his friends do not have a positive view about him as “they consider me as *tenkolegna* [(one) who provokes, artful, sneaky, and provocative]”. When I asked him why he thinks that his friends consider him as *tenkolegna*, he said he and one of his friends do “sneaky things” such as insulting people and snatching things from old people. Responding to my question about whether he is happy with his friends, he said he is not happy about them as “they like to make me angry and I don’t like their jokes”. The only friend I am close with and happy about, he noted, moved away from the area.

Endalk also characterised his relationship with his peers as negative and weak. He told me in detail how he became “very angry” and distressed when his peers at school teased him about his swollen lip that “would not subside” (see his full quote in chapter 5, page 108). He said if the children are not “bigger” than him he often enters into fight with them although “I worry that my lips might get even more swollen if I am hit during the fights”. Sometimes, he said, he just keeps silent, although he will be “very angry inside”. He also talked at length how those in the neighbourhood excluded him from their foot ball team for

having a ball made of plastic bags rather than a “big ball” (see his full quote in chapter 5, pp. 104-105).

Although his family members (particularly his older sister) did not approve of his relationship with one of their neighbours, Endalk had a strong attachment with this neighbour. He even described them as the most important people in his life. He runs errands for them and they, on their part, feed him, allow him to watch television at their house and generally “consider me as part of their family”. However, when I met him a year later during the second phase of my fieldwork, he said, he does not interact much with this neighbour because “now I can watch TV at home”.

When I asked him to describe his character for me, Endalk replied, “I am bad tempered. Throughout the day, no time passes without me getting angry at something. Most of the time I am not happy and I am also sulky”. In response to my question about his behaviour in terms of being outgoing, he said, “I am very shy” and explained how difficult it is for him to interact with someone he does not know, to communicate freely in his house and participate in class. He also described himself as someone who does not do well at school because “I do not participate in my class, I don’t study here [at home], the child who sits with me [at my school] is bad, and he makes me to disturb in class”. Endalk told me that he and his classmate sometimes make fun of “some” of their teachers especially those who hit students and “laugh a lot” in class. When I asked him whether he considered not associating with “bad” children he replied: “I tried not to be with him [my classmate] but it is like an addiction”. The way Endalk described his behaviour, his relationships with other people (such as his friends and peers) and his friends’ view about him (for example “my friends consider me as *tenkolegna* [(one) who provokes, artful, sneaky and provocative]”) suggests that he had some aspects of self-denigration.

### **Case 3: Mamitu**

Mamitu, the fourth of five children, was a thirteen-year-old girl. She was a seventh grade student at a government elementary school. She lived in a single room *Kebele house* with her parents and four siblings. Her mother, the major source of income for the family, sold *Injera* for a living and earned approximately 60 birr a month. Her father worked as a guard but did not support the family at all. Mamitu and her older siblings worked as daily labourers (e.g. washing clothes and car, and fetching water for payment) and supported the

family to a certain extent. During my second phase of fieldwork, Mamitu stopped working and her older sister left for Syria to work as a housemaid and started to support the family financially.

Mamitu had a strong attachment with her mother. In talking about her relationship with her, she said “I am very close with my mother...my mother is the only person who support me financially and who cares about me”. Her devotion to her mother was also reflected in her dreams for the future: “My hope is to support my mother. I would be happy if she could sit at home like our neighbours without having to go out to sell *Injera*”. Mamitu was also very sympathetic towards her mother: she tried to understand her pressure and her limited financial capacity. For example, she said she does not bother her mother with buying clothing during holidays such as New Year and Christmas like other children because “I know that she does not have money”. She assisted her mother with domestic and paid work. When I asked her to tell me about her behaviour in terms of obedience, she said, “I am obedient except when she [my mother] calls me while I am watching TV or playing with my friends”.

Mamitu characterized her relationship with her father as weak. When I asked her what kinds of things she does with him, she replied, “nothing! He comes home very late at night”. Responding to my question about what pleases her father in his relationship with her she said, “I do not know. He does not know anything about me”. She also reported that her father does not support the family financially and does not get along well with her mother and older brother:

*Beth: What pleases you in your relationship with your father?*

*Mamitu: He always quarrels with my brother. When he gets drunk, he always hits my older brother and insults my mother for no reason... if he went to bed without saying anything, if he did not insult my mother and brother I would be happy.*

Mamitu had a supportive relationship with her older siblings. She and her older sister support each other in terms of domestic work and her older brother, whom she described as “like a father to me” supervised her activities, buy her clothing and helped her with studying. She, on her part, gave him money whenever he could not find “business”.

At home, a major source of distress for Mamitu was conflict between her parents. She said, “I get very distressed when there is a fight at home” (see her full quote in chapter 5,

pages 92). In her timeline, Mamitu also indicated conflict between her parents as the only issue, which worried her most.

Table 11: Timeline of Mamitu

Theme	Year	Happening
“The times I worried most”	1996 EC	My father was drunk. He came home and fought with my mother. He also fought with my older brother and he chased my brother out of the house. My brother started to live with my maternal grandmother.

(See her full timeline in appendix 5)

When her parents fight, Mamitu noted, “we [my siblings and I] are the ones who go between them without asking the help and intervention of other people” (chapter 6, page 129).

She felt that she has a reciprocated friendship and, a positive and supportive relationship with her peers. She said she and her friends play, study and work together. “We also correct each other if we make mistakes...I think they are all good. I am happy with my friends”. When I asked her whether she always wants to be with her friends, she replied:

*Mamitu: Very much!*

*Beth: Why?*

*Mamitu: We do things together. We also talk about what things we should do together.*

*Beth: How about them?*

*Mamitu: They also like to be with me. They want me to go to their place every day.*

In response to my question about whether she has friends who will stand by her side during difficult times, Mamitu told me in detail how each of her neighbourhood friends will support her. She said her friends would support her in terms of visiting her when she gets sick, helping her during fights, helping her with her study especially when she does not go to school and with domestic work when there is a feast or bereavement at home.

In talking about her relationship with her peers, she noted, “If there was a task at my house all the children in this neighbourhood would come [to my house] and carry out the task with me. Their cooperation was very nice” (see her full quote in chapter 7, page 182). She also talked at length about how she played and spent time with her peers (both boy and



girls) in the neighbourhood and how her involvement with her peer group encouraged her to keep clean and neat (see chapter 7, page 182).

Mamitu had a weak relationship with her neighbours as “I spend most of my time at work place”. However, her family members had a very good relationship with their neighbours and when she came home from work Mamitu often watched TV at her neighbours’ house. She said she obeys her neighbours even more than she obeys her mother (see empirical chapter 5, page 110).

When I asked her to tell me about her behaviour, Mamitu said, “I get angry quickly. But I don’t like to fight”. She said she becomes angry when her friend interferes and takes sides when she quarrels with her other friends. Nevertheless, in another occasion she described herself as someone who has patience. She said she is “very patient” when children in the neighbourhood (even those who are younger than she is) insults her because “the word of God says praise those who insults you”. Her description of her friends’ view about her suggests that she had a positive self-concept:

*Beth: what do you think is your friends' view about you?*

*Mamitu: My friends both in the neighbourhood and at school say that I have a good behaviour. I am friendly and like to joke. Even if you ask the teachers at my school, they will tell you that I am sociable and have good character*

### ***Shared risks***

Although Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu were confronted with a number of risks in their lives such as lack of physical security (Mamitu) and sickness of mother (Mulatu), as described in chapter 5, the following were the risks, which they experienced in common:

- *Frequent conflict between parents-* individual interviews with Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu (as described in the case study) and their timelines (see appendix 6, 7 and 8) show that frequent conflict between their parents was one of the issues that worried them all most.
- *Conflict with parents-* one of the issues, which made Mulatu “depressed”, was his conflict with his mother (although it happens rarely) and this was true for Endalk who quarrelled with his mother, father and older sister rather frequently.
- *Teasing-*both Mulatu and Endalk were troubled by teasing by their peers, although in both cases teasing did not occur frequently.

- *Exclusion*-both Mulatu and Endalk were also unhappy because of exclusion from their peers, although again both of them did not experience exclusion regularly.

Table 12: Risks experienced by Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu in common

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mulatu</b>	<b>Endalk</b>	<b>Mamitu</b>
Frequent conflict between parents	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conflict with parents	Yes	Yes	No
Teasing	Yes	Yes	No
Exclusion	Yes	Yes	No

### *Coping strategies and efficacy*

The difference between Mulatu and Endalk in terms of their coping strategies was that when faced with the above risks Mulatu used coping strategies that mainly emerged as effective in his accounts whereas, in most cases Endalk employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in his accounts, as indicated in the following table.

Table 13: Comparison of Mulatu's and Endalk's coping strategies and efficacy to shared risks

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mulatu</b>		<b>Endalk</b>	
	<b>Coping strategy</b>	<b>Coping efficacy</b>	<b>Coping strategy</b>	<b>Coping efficacy</b>
Conflict between parents	Going between conflicting parents	Effective	Thinking that nothing bad would happen	Ineffective
Conflict with parents	Seeking the advice of the other parent; Remaining calm	Effective	Running away from home	Ineffective
Teasing	Telling the teaser to stop	Effective	Getting into fight with the teaser; Remaining quiet	Ineffective
Exclusion	Doing nothing	Ineffective	Doing nothing	Ineffective

When faced with conflict with his parents, Mulatu tried to make peace between them, which is a strategy from a “problem-solving” family of coping. This strategy emerged as effective in his accounts of coping not only because he was able to create a peaceful relationship between his parents, (“I reconciled them a couple of times”) but also his effort resulted in his happiness and sense of achievement (see chapter 6, page 131). Whereas when faced with a similar risk Endalk cognitively distanced himself from the problem by thinking that nothing bad would happen which is an example of “escape/avoidance”. This coping strategy emerged as ineffective in his accounts because although the objective of his

response was avoiding worry in reality it did not stop him from thinking that something bad would happen as “when my parents fight... I fear that one day, when she [my mother] loses all her patience, she will go to his bed and strangle him” (see empirical chapter 5, page 93).

In response to conflict with his mother, Mulatu sought the advice of his father who told him to be patient, which is an example of “support seeking” (see chapter 6, page 135). Then perhaps taking into account his father’s advice Mulatu said he remains calm when he quarrels with his mother, which is an example of “emotional regulation”. Both these coping strategies emerged as effective in his accounts because his father’s advice helped him to be calm when he quarrelled with his mother and the fact that he was calm helped his mother to cool down and have a good relationship with him (chapter 6, page 135). In response to conflict with his mother and older sister, Endalk run away from home to partly express his anger at his mother, which is an example of “opposition” (chapter 6, pp. 134-135). This strategy emerged as ineffective in his accounts because he was not able to pursue it for long. Because he was tired and hungry he had to get back home by seeking the assistance of one of his neighbours who assisted him to make peace with his mother and older sister, which is an example of “support seeking” (see chapter 6, page 135).

When he experienced teasing, Mulatu said he tells the teasers to stop which is an example of “problem solving”. This strategy emerged as effective because, for instance, in one occasion the teaser finally came to ask for his apology (chapter 6, page 147). Endalk responded to teasing from the peers at his school about his swollen lip often by entering into fight with them, an example of “opposition”, and sometimes by remaining silent (an example of “helplessness”). These strategies emerged as ineffective because when he entered into fight with them he said, “I worry, though, that my lips might get even more swollen if I am hit during the fights” and when he tried to remain silent but I will be “very angry inside”.

In response to exclusion from their peers, both Mulatu and Endalk (see chapter 6, page 147) reported worry and distress without any active attempt to deal with it, which is an example of “rumination”. Their accounts suggest that exclusion was something that is beyond their control.

Mamitu (who shared one of the risks that Mulatu and Endalk experienced in common) said that in response to conflict between her parents, she with the help of her older siblings tried to go between her parents, an example of “problem-solving”. This strategy emerged as

effective in her accounts because she was convinced that as a result of her action “their [my parents’] attitude towards us as well as towards the family as a whole would improve” (see chapter 6, page 131).

***The influence of protective factors and resources on coping strategies***

Despite facing similar risks (frequent conflict between and with parents, teasing and exclusion from their peers), Mulatu and Endalk coped differently. And their accounts suggest that the efficacy of their coping strategies differed. What was the reason? As I argued in chapter 6 and 7 respectively, personal and environmental resources, and protective factors influenced the children’s coping strategies. That is, Mulatu had access to protective factors and resources that Endalk who employed ineffective coping strategies in response to similar risks did not have, as indicated in the following table.

Table 14: Comparison of Mulatu’s, Endalk’s and Mamitu’s access to protective factors and resources that were identified as essential in chapter 6 and 7

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Protective factors and resources</b>	<b>Mulatu</b>	<b>Endalk</b>	<b>Mamitu</b>
Conflict between parents	Good relationship at least with one parent and older siblings (this requires the children to be obedient and respectful)	Yes	No	Yes
Conflict with parents	Not getting angry quickly (patience)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Teasing	Not getting angry quickly (patience)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Exclusion	None	None	None	Not applicable

In addition to the above resources, unlike Endalk, Mulatu reported that he has a reciprocated friendship and a positive relationship with his peers. He also described himself as outgoing. From the way he talked about his behaviour, academic performance and relationship with other people, it is also clear that Mulatu had a positive-self concept. On the other hand, Endalk’s negative self- concept was evident in the way he described his behaviour, his friends’ view about him and his educational performance. He also described himself as shy. Here it is important to consider the interconnection among the different protective factors and resources. That is, the fact that Mulatu had a good relationship with his parents (particularly the fact that he was obedient and respectful to them) helped him to have a positive relationship with his neighbours, peers, and vice versa. In talking about his relationship with his peers, Mulatu, for example, said “...they [children in this area] like me,

they like me because I always obey their parents. And for this reason, their parents consider me as a good child and advice their children to be friends with me” (chapter 7, page 183). He also said when he comes home after fighting with his friends “I would also get angry here [at home]” and refuse to obey (chapter 5, page 103). The same interconnection could also be made regarding Endalk.

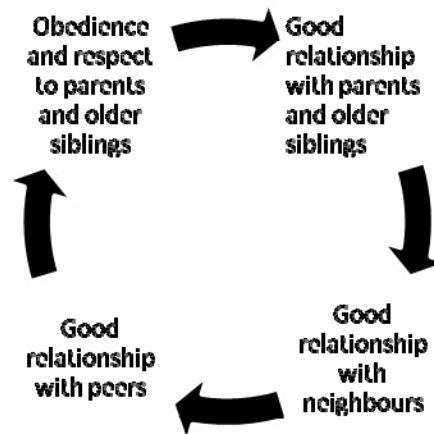


Figure 21: Interconnection among different protective factors and resources

Mulatu’s and Endalk’s lives were also different in other respects. Unlike Mulatu, Endalk had to live with an alcoholic father who frequently fought with his mother (the father was more often the aggressor). Moreover, unlike Endalk, Mulatu had to live with a constantly sick mother who often took to bed for a very long period. Nevertheless, these issues did not appear to have much effect in the way Mulatu and Endalk responded to the risks that they experienced in common, their coping strategies and how the effectiveness of these coping strategies emerged in their accounts. The case of Mamitu who, like Mulatu and Endalk, was faced with conflict between her parents was a good example in this respect. Like Endalk, Mamitu lived with an alcoholic father who frequently fought with her mother. However, unlike Endalk, she responded to the conflict between her parents by going between them and this strategy emerged as effective in her accounts. Mamitu and Endalk’s lives were different in that unlike Endalk, although her father was alcoholic and she did not have a good relationship with him, her relationship with her mother and older siblings was positive. Unlike Endalk, Mamitu also felt that she has a reciprocated friendship and a positive and supportive relationship with her peers. Probably because of the positive

relationship she had with most of her family members, friends and peers, Mamitu also had a positive self-concept (see, for example, how she described her friends' view about her). What is more, unlike Endalk, she described herself as friendly, someone who likes to joke and "very patient".

### 8.2.2. Children who faced mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers and teasing by their peers

The lives of Hezera and Bereket were comparable because they experienced similar risks but coped differently. Their accounts also suggest that the effectiveness of their coping strategies differed. Furthermore, like Mulatu, Endalk and Mamitu, they had a number of characteristics in common. They were nearly the same age. Both lived with caregivers who are not their biological parents because both of them lost their parents at an early age. Both had only one sibling (an older sister). The major source of income for both of them was Tesfa Social and Development Association. Both went to the same government elementary school and both were followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as indicated in the following table.

Table 15: Biographical information about Hezera and Bereket

Characteristic	Hezera	Bereket
Age	11	12
Gender	Male	Male
Type of family	Lived with caregivers who are not biological parents	Lived with caregivers who are not biological parents
Educational status	Grade 6	Grade 5
Family size	Four	Three
Major source of income	Tesfa Social and Development Association	Tesfa Social and Development Association
Religion	Ethiopian Orthodox Christian	Ethiopian Orthodox Christian

#### Case 4: Hezera

Hezera was an eleven-year-old boy. He was a sixth grade student at a government elementary school. He lived in a single room *Kebele house* with his older sister and two maternal uncles. His sister, 18 years old, occasionally worked as a parking lot attendant to support the family. During school vacation, Hezera also worked for an auto-mechanic as an assistant. His two uncles earned income through daily labour. One of them unloaded things from trucks for payment and supported the household very infrequently while the other

worked at a taxi stand as a line enforcer but did not support the family at all. Hezera's parents died when he was very small so he did not get the chance to know them. His grandmother who died six months before I met him raised him. Hezera and his sister relied on food support, which they get from Tesfa Social and Development Association every month. The same association also gave material support (school materials including school uniform and one casual dress and shoes) once a year for Hezera.

Hezera viewed his relationship with his older sister as very good. In describing his relationship with her he noted, "We spend time together, we eat together and when she prepares coffee [during coffee ceremony] we make jokes about each other". He also saw her as understanding and caring: "when I become very worried with something I will talk to her because she understands. She is the only one who listens to me...She is the only one who cares about me". His account suggests that his older sister was also the only person in the family who supervised his activities and showed an interest in what he does: "apart from her, the others [my two uncles] say 'I don't care'".

Hezera had a very weak relationship with his two uncles, whom he described, as "whatever I do they do not care. They just want me to run errands for them when they come home at night". He also considered them as emotionally and physically abusive both to him and to his sister. Apart from hitting and threatening him with being chased out of the house "for no reason" (see chapter 5), he said, his two uncles tried to spoil his relationship with the people whom he gets emotional and material support from (his sister, neighbours and relatives):

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in relation to depression. Do you get depressed?*

*Hezera: ... For example, yesterday I was depressed. I went on an errand to my [other] uncle's place. When I came back, I was told that 20 birr has missed from my sister's purse. My uncle took it. However, he wanted me to take the blame and so he created different stories. My sister believed him and hit me a lot. However, later all people [my sister, neighbours and relatives] knew that he is lying. For that reason, I was very depressed the whole day.*

When I asked Hezera how often incidents like this happen, he replied, "quite often. He always creates different stories and gossip around to spoil my relationship with neighbours and relatives". Hezera also told me that his sister lost one of her tooth when one of his uncles hit her for going to her friend's house without his knowledge.

At home, as indicated above, the major source of worry for Hezera was mistreatment at the hands of his two uncles. This included being deprived of emotional and material support, physical violence, being denied time for play and being forced to do tasks, which are beyond his capacity. In the timeline I asked him to do, Hezera also depicted restricted movement because of his uncles as one of the issues, which makes him sad.

Table 16: Timeline of Hezera

Theme	Year	Happening
“The times I was sad/unhappy”	1994 EC	At this time, I could not go out of the house. If I did, my uncles would hit me. I was very sad

(See his full timeline in appendix 6)

Hezera responded to the experience of mistreatment mainly to the lack of emotional and material support from his caregivers by seeing his life in a positive light, particularly by comparing his situation with those he saw as worse off (i.e. “children who spend the night on the street”) (see his quote in chapter 6, page 139).

Hezera felt that he has a reciprocated friendship and a positive relationship with his peers. He said he feels free when he is with his friends “because we talk about things, we play and do all things together”. When I asked him what he thinks regarding his friends’ view about him, Hezera replied:

*Hezera: They consider me as someone who has a good behaviour. For instance, Wondamagegn [my close friend] considers me as a good person. Even when I get angry with people and speak bad words, he understands. He does not think that I am wrong. He speaks very good things about me.*

Hezera also reported that he could rely on his friends during difficult times. He noted “last time, I was very sick after coming back from a rural area. At that time both of them [my friends] came home quite a number of times to visit me”.

In describing his relationship with his peers, Hezera said, “There are times that my friends [in the neighbourhood] tease me but I don’t get angry for this reason. Since we make fun of each other often and since I know that there are children who insult you through jokes, I don’t take it seriously...” (See his full quote in chapter 6, page 147).



He had a very strong relationship with his neighbours. He said his neighbours feed him when he gets hungry, cloth him, give him emotional and material support, and intervene whenever his two uncles tried to hit him. He obeyed and respected them “very much”. During the early periods of my fieldwork when I had formal and informal discussion with his neighbours, I also wrote in my fieldwork diary the following about his relationship with his neighbours:

*...Hezera seems a very decent boy. From the way his neighbours talked about him, I got the impression that all his neighbours love him. They also feel sorry for him for losing all his beloveds at this early age*

Hezera considered himself as someone who has “a good character” (which he in another occasion described as being obedient and respectful, having patience and being a good student) and who is outgoing, active inside as well as outside school:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in terms of being out going.*

*Hezera: I am not shy. I sang before many people in my school. For example, when I go to my relatives' place I do not feel shy even if I have not met them before.*

In terms of educational performance, Hezera said, he is “average”.

### **Case 5: Bereket**

Bereket was a twelve-year-old boy. He was a fifth grade student at a government elementary school. He lived in a single room *Kebele house* with his sister and a relative. His sister, 13 years old, was a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student at the same school. During school vacation, she sold food items on the street and Bereket worked as a shoeshine boy to support the family. The relative was a shoe merchant. When he spent the night at their place, which was often three times a week, he gave them money for food but at many other times Bereket and his sister depended on their neighbours for food. Bereket's parents died when he was a six-year-old child. They died one after another within a period of two months. Since then he and his sister resided with the relative. Tesfa Social and Development Association gave food support every month for his sister and 90 birr per month for him. The same organization also gave material support (School materials including school uniform and one casual dress and shoes) once a year for both of them.

Bereket's account suggests that he had a very variable relationship with his older sister. During the early periods of my fieldwork, he talked positively about their relationship. He said, "During our spare time we play together, we study together, we eat our lunch together, I help her with selling food items [on the street] and sometimes we go to church together". However, later their relationship got weak as Bereket started to disobey her: "it is not nice when I always clean the house and make the bed. For this reason, sometimes I get angry and say no to her when she tells me to do these tasks and then she gets angry at me". He also felt that his sister does not care enough about him. For example, he explains at length how she hides from him and eats what they agreed to save for dinner and how she spends the money, which was given by the caregiver for food, for her own purpose.

From the start, Bereket did not interact much with his caregiver. He reported, "I don't do anything with him. When he comes home from work he just changes his cloth and goes to his friends". Bereket also felt that his caregiver does not care enough about his and his sister's wellbeing: "He does not always give us money for food and he does not supervise us properly". He also felt that his caregiver discriminates against him in favour of his older sister:

*Beth: What makes you happy in your relationship with him?*

*Bereket: When he says go [to neighbour's house] and watch TV together [but he does that rarely] [...] he does not treat us equally. For instance, [there was this time when] he brought home some biscuits, you know the ones that sell for two birr, and shared it only with Berhane [my sister], giving me nothing at all. He favoured her because she washes his clothes but he does not know that I also help in the cloth washing.*

Bereket also viewed his caregiver as emotionally and physically abusive both to him and to his sister. "He always hits me for reasons that I do not know" and once "he refused to let my sister into the house for three days because she forgot to wash his cloth". He said his sister had to sleep at their neighbour's house for three days before his caregiver let her into the house after their neighbours begged him to do so. Bereket also indicated that he lives "in constant worry and fear" because his caregiver hits him and that he bends his neck (sign of fear) whenever he sees his caregiver (see his quotes in chapter 5, page 100).

During the first phase of my fieldwork, Bereket had some close friends who play and go to church with him but when I met him at the beginning of my second phase of fieldwork he said "I quarrelled with all my friends [in the neighbourhood] except Webeshet and

Tamerat”. When I asked him the reason, he said, “They just refused to speak to me”. He also felt that he could not rely on his friends during difficult times. When I asked him whether he has friends who will stand by him during difficult times, he replied, “I don't rely on anybody” because “they do not come [to my house]. It is me who go to their places”.

In talking about his relationship with his peers, Bereket noted, “I don't get along with children in this neighbourhood” because “they betray you for the sake of coins [money]” (see chapter 5, page 106). One of the issues, which caused him aggravation, was also related to the fact that his peers teased him: “Whey they suddenly press me or push me from the back I get frustrated. I also do not like their teasing. When they say bad things about my mother, I get into a fight with them” (see his full quote in chapter 6, page 146).

Bereket's relationship with his neighbours was very variable. As with his relationship with his older sister, during the early periods of my fieldwork he considered his neighbours as a source of emotional and material support. When I asked him what makes him happy one of the issues that he mentioned was having a good relationship with his neighbours. He even disapproved of the fact that his sister frequently quarrelled with them. His neighbours, he said, care for him and for his sister and provide them with food whenever their caregiver spends the night out without giving them money for food. However, later, one of the things that made Bereket unhappy was related to these neighbours. As with his sister, the relationship he had with his neighbours changed when he started to disobey them: “I was obedient to them. But after they quarrelled with Bedilu [caregiver] I started to say no to them”.

When I asked him to tell me about his behaviour in general, Bereket replied, “I have a character of getting into fight with my friends [in the neighbourhood] when they make me angry. The other is I get angry quickly”. He also viewed himself as shy:

*Beth: Tell me about your behaviour in relation to being outgoing.*

*Bereket: I bend my neck when people come near me. Nevertheless, when people are not around me I talk very much.*

Interestingly, in another occasion (in relation to my question about what good behaviour means to him) he described what he said about himself above as an example of a bad behaviour: “[...] he [a child] has a bad behaviour when he bends his neck when people are around him and talk very much when they left”. The negative self-concept, which is evident

in the above quote (i.e. describing his own behaviour as bad), is also reflected in Bereket's description of his educational performance: "I study but I don't know why I don't understand things. I mean, I study but my results are not good".

### ***Shared risks***

Both Hezera and Bereket were confronted with the following risks:

- *Mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers*: One of the issues that distressed both Hezera and Bereket was mistreatment at the hands of their caregivers. Mistreatment took the form of, among other things, beatings, verbal threat, heavy or unequal workload and being deprived of emotional and material support.
- *Teasing*: both Hezera and Bereket reported teasing by their peers.

### ***Coping strategies and efficacy***

Hezera and Bereket differed in the way they responded to the risks that they experienced in common and the way the efficacy of their coping strategies emerged in their accounts, as indicated in the following table.

Table 17: Comparison of Hezera's and Bereket's coping strategies and efficacy to shared risks

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Hezera</b>		<b>Bereket</b>	
	<b>Coping strategy</b>	<b>Coping efficacy</b>	<b>Coping strategy</b>	<b>Coping efficacy</b>
Mistreatment at the hands of caregivers	Seeing life in a positive light	Effective	Constant worry and fear	Ineffective
Teasing	Conceptualizing the teasing as a joke	Effective	Getting into fight with the teasers	Ineffective

When confronted with mistreatment (in the form of being deprived of emotional and material support) at the hands of his two uncles, Hezera responded by seeing his life in a positive light which is an example of "positive cognitive restructuring". This coping strategy emerged as effective in his accounts. He said he is content with his situation: "my situation is not bad... whatever constraints I face I thank my God for the situation I am in" (see chapter 6 page 139). Bereket, on the other hand, was overwhelmed by the experience of mistreatment. He said he lives "in constant worry and fear" which is an example of

“rumination”. This coping strategy emerged as ineffective in his accounts in the sense that it did not liberate him from emotional distress (see chapter 6 pp. 139-140).

When he is teased, Hezera conceptualized the experience in a positive way by considering the teasing as a joke, which is an example of “positive cognitive restructuring”. This coping strategy emerged as effective because despite the experience of teasing, he was able to have a good relationship with his friends and peers (see chapter 6). Bereket said when faced with teasing he gets into fight with the teasers, an example of “opposition”. This strategy emerged as ineffective because he reported that his friends do not want to play with him (see chapter 6, page 148).

### ***The influence of protective factors and resources on coping strategies***

The way Hezera and Bereket responded to shared risks and the way the efficacy of their coping strategies emerged in their accounts differed because they did not have equal access to relevant protective factors and resources, as indicated in the table below.

Table 18: Comparison of Hezera’s and Bereket’s access to protective factors and resources that were identified as essential in chapter 6 and 7

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Protective factors and resources</b>	<b>Hezera</b>	<b>Bereket</b>
Mistreatment at the hands of caregivers	Consistent emotional and material support from older siblings and neighbours Good relationships with friends and peers	Yes	No
Teasing	Not getting angry quickly (patience)	Yes	No

Unlike Bereket who had a very variable relationship with his older sister and neighbours, Hezera benefited from a consistent emotional and material support from his older sister and neighbours. Again unlike Bereket who described himself as “I get angry quickly”, Hezera reported that he has patience. Hezera and Bereket also differed in terms of their self-concept. Hezera described his behaviour and his relationship with other people positively (“They [my friends] consider me as someone who has a good behaviour”), while Bereket talked about himself in a negative manner (“I study but I don't know why I don't understand things”). What is more, unlike Bereket, Hezera had a reciprocated friendship and a positive relationship with his peers.

### **8.3. Summary: What was Common about the Children who Employed Coping Strategies that Emerged as Effective in their Accounts?**

From the above case studies, it is evident that the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts had access to protective factors and resources, which the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts did not have, as described below:

#### ***Internal resources:***

- *Ability to control one's temper ("patience"):* the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they had the capacity to control their tempers (i.e. to be patient). This is partly related to aspects of the culture. Ethiopian society generally values patience very much and children are taught to be patient by their parents from very early on in their lives.
- *Obedience and respect (generally acting in socially acceptable ways):* the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they were obedient and respectful to their parents (caregivers), older siblings and neighbours.
- *Positive self-concept:* the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts had a positive self-concept. This was particularly indicated in the children's descriptions of their characteristics, their relationship with other people, their friends' view about them and their educational performance. They described themselves as having socially acceptable characteristics like being obedient, respectful, good student, and said that they get along well with other people and their friends' have positive view about them.
- *Sociable:* the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they are sociable.

#### ***External supports:***

- *Good relationship at least with one parent and/or older siblings:* the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts felt that they have good relationship at least with one of their parents and older siblings. Their relationships were characterized by reciprocated roles and responsibilities. The children

were obedient and respectful to their parents and/or older siblings, and their parents and older siblings gave them love, care, support, and supervision in return.

- *Reciprocated supportive relationships with neighbours*: the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts said they have a reciprocated supportive relationship with their neighbours. The children obeyed and respected their neighbours and their neighbours supported them both emotionally and materially. These children had also at least one family member who has a good relationship with neighbours. While Endalk and Hezera struggled to keep their good relationships with their neighbours going despite family members' disapproval, Bereket was forced to disrupt the reciprocated supportive relationship he had with his neighbours.
- *Reciprocated friendship*: the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they and their friends help each other in terms of, among other things, work and study and play together.
- *Positive relationships with peers*: the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they have a positive relationship with their peers.

#### **8.4. Discussion**

What differentiates children who cope effectively in the face of difficulties from those who do not when faced with similar difficulties has been a major question in the resilience literature since a systematic empirical study of the concept began some forty years ago (Cicchetti and Garmezy, 1993; Masten et al, 1991). In the existing literature, there are two conceptual approaches to answering this question. The first approach, which we find in earlier studies, is where resilience is conceptualized as the capacity of the individual child which often means resilient children have certain personal qualities that non-resilient children do not have (such as autonomy, easy temperament and high self-esteem). The term “invulnerable” was used to describe such children (e.g. Anthony, 1973) as it was believed that resilient children could cope successfully no matter what they experienced. The second approach dismissed the claim that resilience is determined solely by the capacity of the individual child and acknowledged the role of external factors or the environment in the construction of resilience. Here, the availability of *protective* factors and mechanisms

which include both personal qualities of children and their environment are believed to determine whether children are resilient or not (e.g. Masten and Garmezy, 1985; Werner and Smith, 1992, 2001). After reviewing the findings of the existing studies on resilience, Garmezy (1985), for example, summarized the characteristics of a resilient child at three levels: temperament of the child, family and external support. Emmy Werner (1989) who studied the lives of 698 children born and raised on the Hawaiian island of Kauai echoed Garmezy's summary in her description of protective factors:

Three types of protective factors emerge from our analysis of the developmental course of high-risk children from infancy to adulthood: 1) dispositional attributes of the individual, such as activity level and sociability, at least average intelligence, competence in communication skills (language and reading) and an internal locus of control 2) affectional ties within the family that provide emotional support in times of stress, whether from a parent, a sibling, spouse, or mate; and 3) external support systems whether in school, at work, or church, that reward the individual's competencies and determination and provides a belief system by which to live (p. 80).

The five cases presented in this chapter supported the second approach (i.e. that of Garmezy, 1985 and Werner, 1989, 1992). The children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts had access to protective factors and resources at three levels, which the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts did not have. At the child level, they had the ability to control their temper, the ability to act in socially acceptable ways and positive self-concept. At the family level, they had good relationships with parents and older siblings, and at the community level, they had good relationships with friends, peers and neighbours. From the case studies, it was clear that the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts were not "invincible" in relation to all the risks that they experienced. Mulatu, for example, employed effective coping strategies in response to some of the risks (such as conflict between and with parents and teasing) that he faced but the coping strategy that he used in response to exclusion from his peers emerged as ineffective in his accounts. It appears that he required more than the protective factors and resources, which were available to him in order to effectively deal with exclusion by his peers.



But it should be emphasised that although the findings from the five cases generally fit into the second approach which conceptualized protective factors and mechanisms as operating at three broad levels (at the level of the community, the family and the child), the content of each of these levels reflected the culture and context in which the children live. I agree with Ungar (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) and Boyden and Mann (2005) that culture and context shape the processes and outcomes of resilience, including the mediating factors associated with it. In the case studies, culturally specific aspects of the children's resilience were evident, such as being obedient and respectful to parents, older siblings and neighbours as a prerequisite to having good relationships with these categories of people, and the importance of patience for positive relationships with parents and peers. As argued by Ungar (2008) the children's resilience depended on two processes that were shaped by the culture in which they live. First, the extent to which the children were able to have good relationships with their parents, older siblings, friends, peers and neighbours by behaving and acting in culturally acceptable ways such as by being obedient, respectful and patient. Second, the extent to which these categories of people provided the children with material and emotional support. In other words, the extent to which these categories of people behaved and acted in culturally acceptable ways (e.g. did they provide the children with material and emotional support when the children obeyed and respected them and when they were patient).

My work also differs from previous approaches to children's resilience in that it defines dimensions of resilience (including risks, protective factors and short-term outcomes) based on the perspectives of the children themselves. This qualitative child-centred approach to risk-and-resilience has demonstrated the importance of the culture and context-specific nature of resilience and also the interconnections between the different protective factors and resources.

## **8.5. Conclusion**

Using five case examples, this chapter has explored possible reasons why some of the children interviewed in Addis Ababa used effective coping strategies in response to what they identified as risks, while others who experienced similar risks employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts. While each of the five cases showed a unique process of dealing with risks, analysis of the five cases suggests that the children

who used strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts had access to internal and external protective factors and resources, which the children who employed coping strategies that emerged as ineffective did not have. This finding echoes the approach of Garmezy (1995) and Werner (1989, 1992) in which protective factors and mechanisms, which differentiate resilient and non-resilient children, are conceptualized as operating at three broad levels: at the child, family and community level. Nevertheless, the contents of each of these levels reflected the culture and context in which the children live, as Ungar (2005, 2008) and Boyden and Mann (2005) have emphasised.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

### **9.1. Introduction**

Drawing on the concept of ‘wellbeing’ and foregrounding the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves, this thesis has endeavoured to answer the three related research questions that guided the conduct of the study:

- a) First, what do children who live in poverty in an urban Ethiopian setting see as risks to their wellbeing and how does this compare with the risks that have been identified in the theoretical and empirical literature on children in poverty?
- b) Second, how do the children interviewed in this study view their ways of dealing with what they perceived as risks (i.e. their coping strategies), the efficacy of their coping strategies and the relationship between these risks and their impact on their wellbeing? Are the coping strategies, coping efficacy and possible relationships identified in the children’s accounts different from those identified in the literature?
- c) Third, what are the factors that the children see as having a positive influence on their wellbeing? In addition, what are the factors that they viewed as moderating the negative effects of risks to lead to positive or resilient outcomes? Are these factors different from those identified in the literature?

I began the thesis by reviewing literature on child poverty and the experiences of children living in poverty from both developed and developing countries, and examining the theoretical and methodological frameworks informing this literature. This led me to conclude that despite the valuable lessons to be learnt from this literature in relation to the distribution and outcomes of child poverty for the most part poor children’s perspectives and their experiences of risk, coping and resilience were overlooked. This is particularly true for economically and developmentally oriented child poverty studies, whose methods preclude them from presenting children as active subjects with agency and their own perspectives. Studies exploring children’s perspectives and experiences of living in poverty using qualitative and mixed methods, on the other hand, have emphasised the agency, heterogeneity and strength of children living in poverty (e.g. Ridge, 2002; Van der Hoek, 2005). This is particularly true of numerous qualitative and ethnographic studies that examine the lives of poor children in developing countries in the context of child labour, HIV/AIDS and street life which document the active role children play in their life and

their families' lives, their resourcefulness and resilience (e.g. Henderson, 2006). These studies and the theoretical and methodological insights of the new childhood studies have greatly influenced my own work.

My analysis of the existing child poverty literature is followed in the thesis by an attempt to overcome the theoretical and methodological challenges that I have identified. Theoretically, I found the interplay between “coping” and “resilience” most helpful for understanding poor children’s perspectives on risk, their experiences of risks, and their ways of dealing with these risks for three reasons. First, theoretical frameworks on both risk and resilience allow room to explore the kinds of issues poor children view as risks without necessarily assuming that poverty is a risk to their wellbeing. Second, both ‘coping’ and ‘resilience’ are concerned with people’s responses in the context of risks and acknowledge variability in children’s outcomes in the context of risks. For example, not all children who experience risks show negative outcomes. Third, both coping and resilience recognize children’s agency, evidenced by their active role in dealing with stressful situations or risks.

However, I was also aware that these constructs might not always do justice to the children’s accounts of their feelings and perceptions. In fact, part of the disciplinary contribution of the thesis is in seeing the extent to which theoretical constructs generated primarily through observation of western children can capture the perspectives and experiences of children in diverse contexts. The thesis has shown the contribution to conventional coping and resilience theories that can be made by research that captures the value and meaning of culturally embedded perspectives and experiences of interviewed children (e.g. the value and meaning of being patient, and the importance of obedience and respect as a prerequisite to have good relationships with parents and neighbours).

As my intention was to look not only at factors that affect the children’s sense of wellbeing negatively (“risks”), but also those that affect their sense of wellbeing positively, my study has drawn on the concept of “positive influences” as well as risks (Woodhead, 2004). As a guiding concept, “wellbeing” was useful to study the lives of the children beyond their poverty, including their strengths and positive experiences. It also helped to bring the children’s perspectives and their experiences of life into focus and to situate these in a specific socio-cultural context. The thesis, therefore, has brought together various concepts employed by diverse research paradigms: “risks”, “coping”, “resilience”,

“protective factors”, “positive influences” and “wellbeing” and this can be seen as a significant contribution.

My interpretation of the children’s accounts suggests that there is a relationship between these diverse concepts, as I explain below. Coping was the children’s intentional physical and mental response to perceived risks, i.e. what the children actually did when they were faced with what they perceived as risks. Resilience was the children’s ability to cope effectively in the face of perceived risks. Hence, the ways the children dealt with perceived risks (their coping strategies) were an important feature of their resilience. As I will discuss in the following section, the children’s accounts also suggest that their access to protective factors (such as good relationship with parents, older siblings, friends and neighbours) affected whether they see themselves as coping effectively in the face of risks. Resilience, then, was not only about the children’s actions, but also about their access to protective factors. Coping strategies alone could not guarantee good outcomes for the children in the face of risks. Good outcomes depended primarily on the children’s access to protective factors, which in this study emerged from the children’s relationships. The children’s accounts further suggest that there is a possible relation between their coping efficacy and their sense of wellbeing, as the children who employed effective coping strategies appear to have increased or improved their sense of wellbeing and those that used ineffective coping strategies seem to have no improvement in their sense of wellbeing.

Methodologically, I adopted a child-centred approach. My analysis of risks, coping strategies and resilience was entirely based on the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves. To bring out the children’s perspectives and their experiences, and to situate these in a socio-cultural context, I used qualitative research methods such as semi-structured individual interviews with the children, diaries written by the children on a daily basis, drawings and timelines. Nonetheless, I recognized that this child-centred approach might have some limitations. It does not, for example, allow us to have a complete picture of the children’s lives, as the perspectives of people who were important in the children’s lives (such as their parents, neighbours and friends) were not included. Broader issues that affect the lives of the children such as the political economy of childhood in urban Ethiopia were not discussed in any detail in the thesis (for a discussion of the political economy of childhood in Ethiopia, see Abebe, 2007, 2008b and Poluha, 2004).

The fact that I spent a good amount of time with the children and I was able to strike up a “friendship” with many of them and their parents also raised some ethical issues. For example, at some points it was difficult for me to distinguish my role as a researcher and as someone perceived to be there to help the children in whatever way possible (financially, morally etc). My closeness to them made me feel passionately about their lives, and at times I just wanted to concentrate on changing their situation. At the end of my fieldwork, saying good-bye also proved to be a difficult task. On many occasions, I broke down and cried. At the end of my 1<sup>st</sup> phase of fieldwork, this was relatively easy because then I also told them that I would come back again to do my 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of fieldwork. However, when I finally prepared to leave, I think we both felt that we might not see each other again. I also felt that I had not managed to fulfil all their expectations, despite the fact that at the beginning of my fieldwork I told them that I am a student and the children and their families knew that I could not help them with all their problems.

In the second section of this chapter, I review the key findings of the thesis, and in the third, I present some important empirical and theoretical implications. In the fourth section, I discuss some overarching themes that have important implications for child poverty policy and practice. Finally, I suggest areas for future research.

## **9.2. Summary of the Main Findings**

My conscious effort to look at the lives of poor children beyond their poverty and to base my insights on the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves has produced a major point that was central to chapter 5 on risks and their consequences for the sense of wellbeing of poor children in Addis Ababa. That is, in contrast to much of the child poverty literature, which conceptualizes poverty as the main risk to poor children’s wellbeing, in the children’s accounts *negative relationships* emerged as a major factor adversely affecting their sense of wellbeing. Negative relationships included conflict between and with parents, conflict with caregivers who are not biological parents, conflict with friends, peers and neighbours. Poverty was seen a direct risk to wellbeing only by the children who came from single-parent families who did not mention any other major risk to their wellbeing. The majority of the children from two-parent families and most of the children who lived with caregivers (who are not their biological parents) did not talk about their poverty as a risk to their wellbeing. It appears that these children were more worried by other risks such as conflict between parents and mistreatment at the hands of their

caregivers than their shortages of basic things in life such as food, sleeping space, clothing etc. That is to say, when the children were faced with more than one risk to their wellbeing they tended to prioritize the risk that has the greatest perceived effect on their wellbeing.

However, one needs to be careful when making generalizations based on this finding as the situation of the interviewed children might differ from the situation of other children living in poverty elsewhere due to the specific characteristics of the study site. Many poor children in Kolfe area are faced with HIV/AIDS related parental death and fathers who leave their wives because of unemployment, large family size, and quarrels (Feleke et al, 2006). The frequency of orphan-hood and single parenthood in the area is reflected in my sample. I have interviewed eight children who lived with a single parent, nine children who lost both of their parents and nine children who lived with both of their parents. In the lives of interviewed children, there were, therefore, other difficulties (e.g. absent fathers) apart from their poverty or material disadvantage.

That some children felt negative relationships were a greater risk does not imply that poverty is not a potential risk to children's wellbeing. There is no doubt that children from poor families are likely to face greater physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional risks than children from non-poor families (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997). Rather, the finding indicates that there was a complex and indirect relationship between poverty and the children's sense of wellbeing. This relationship was mediated by, among other things, the children's interpretation of their situation and the socio-cultural context in which they live. Their interpretation of their situation could be affected by a number of factors such as the type of family and neighbourhood they live in, their personal characteristics, their knowledge of alternative ways of life and adaptation. In relation to adaptation, for example, one can argue that the majority of children in this study did not view poverty as a major risk to their wellbeing maybe because poverty is so prevalent in their area that they viewed their poverty as normal. In fact, according to the adaptation argument, poor children who live in generally poor neighbourhoods are less likely to be distressed by their poverty than those who live in neighbourhoods that are relatively well-off. For example, one of the boys I interviewed said: "I am [a] happy [boy]! Since there are a lot of poor people in this area I don't think about what I don't have". Similarly, children who are raised in poverty are less likely to view poverty as a risk to their wellbeing than those who have come to live in poverty later (like after the death of parents etc).

Studies have also shown that how children perceive the poverty they experience differs according to their personal characteristics, which might be influenced by genetic as well as environmental factors (Garmezy, 1993). Thus, children who see their poverty as a temporary situation, i.e. those who look forward to a better future or hope to change their current situation through hard work and success at school, are less likely to view their poverty as a significant risk to their wellbeing. Moreover, because of religion or other value systems, some of the children I interviewed were content with what they have (often fearing that things could be worse). Some of them could even find something redeeming about their poverty. As one of the boys says, “being poor is sometimes good [because] it makes you respect your religion and be God-fearing”. Furthermore, the children I interviewed did not experience the same intensity and level of deprivation. Even among the very poor there was a hierarchy of poverty, and while in some instances poverty meant not having extra pieces of clothing, in other cases it meant having very little or nothing at all to eat. It appears that the relationship between poverty and the children’s sense of their wellbeing is neither direct nor conclusive.

My attempt to understand the impacts of what the children perceived as risks to their wellbeing in a *differentiated* and *full* manner and to base my analysis on the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves have produced two important points which were central to chapter 6 and 7 on coping strategies and protective factors. First, the efficacy of the children’s coping strategies influenced their sense of wellbeing. That is, when confronted with risks, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts appear to have improved or increased their sense of wellbeing, while those who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts seem to have experienced no improvement in their sense of wellbeing. Second, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts were those who reported having access to protective factors (such as good relationships with parents and older siblings, friends and neighbours) and the children who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts were those who reported not having access to these protective factors. The children’s accounts also suggest that personal and environmental resources, such as temperament and parental influence, and other factors such as the reasons for conflict influenced their coping strategies for some of the risks. This was particularly true of conflict with friends.



The dominant coping model (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) proved to be useful to look at the relationship between risks and their perceived impact on interviewed children's wellbeing. However, as Wong et al (2006) argue, what the children perceived as risks, the kind of coping strategies they employed in response to these risks and the resources they drew on for their coping strategies were all shaped by their socio-cultural context. For this reason, while the coping categorization of Skinner et al (2003) was useful to organise the coping strategies of interviewed children, it could not fully capture the meaning of some of the children's culturally specific ways of coping such as "being patient" or "not getting angry quickly" (see also Mulatu, 1997; Martin, 2004). The children's responses to perceived risks are not only examples of coping, as children do more than cope. I think it is important to acknowledge that coping is just one of numerous interpretations one could give to the children's responses to perceived risks. In other words, coping is important but cannot provide a full account of the children's actions.

The children's accounts also suggest that there were certain "rules" that they had to respect in order to have access to external protective factors such as good relationships with family members, friends and neighbours. Obedience and respect were the "rules" that the children had to follow in order to have good relationship with parents and neighbours, and to have good relationships with friends "being there for each other" was important. This finding is in contrast to the variable-focused models of resilience that appear to present external protective factors as independent of children's behaviours and actions, as described in chapter 3. The children's accounts in this study suggest that protective factors, which mainly meant having good relationships with people who were most important in the children's lives, are as dependent on children's behaviours and actions as they are on the external environment (the role and responsibilities of parents/caregivers, friends, peers and neighbours in this case). For example, the children in this study reported that neighbours were more likely to provide them with emotional and material support when they are obedient and respectful to them than when they are not.

What is more, the meaning of these reciprocal interactions between the children and people who were important to them was dependent on the culture the children live in. Obedience, respect and patience from children to parents, for example, are highly valued in Ethiopian society. The children's accounts suggest that their relationships with their parents and with older siblings, friends, peers and neighbours were affected by whether they are

obedient, respectful and patient. There was also a gender dimension to some of these aspects. That is, girls were expected to be much more obedient and respectful than boys.

In the children's accounts, good relationships with and between family members, friends, peers and neighbours also emerged as the most important factor that positively affected their wellbeing ('positive influences'). Other 'positive influences' included education, working, ability to worship and engage in cultural/social activities, hygiene and health, and ability to fulfil material needs. Hence, in the children's accounts 'positive influences' and 'protective factors' were related; in fact the latter could be seen as being contained inside the former.

In the last chapter of the thesis (chapter 8), I explored the propositions outlined above further by comparing the lives of the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts with those who experienced similar risks but who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts. I have argued that the children who used effective coping strategies had access to internal and external protective factors, which the children who used ineffective coping strategies did not have. For example, unlike the children who used coping strategies that emerged as ineffective in their accounts, those who employed effective coping strategies reported that they have the capacity to control their tempers (i.e. to be patient). They also reported that they are obedient and respectful to their parents (caregivers), older siblings and neighbours, that they feel positive about their relationship with other people (such as friends and neighbours) and their school achievement, and that they are sociable.

In terms of external protective factors, the children who used coping strategies that emerged as effective in their accounts reported that they have a good relationship with at least one of their parents or older siblings, that they have a reciprocated and supportive relationship with their neighbours and friends, and that they have a positive relationship with their peers. Their relationships were particularly characterized by reciprocated roles and responsibilities. For example, the children were obedient and respectful to their parents and/or older siblings, and their parents and older siblings gave them love, care, support, and supervision in return. They obeyed and respected their neighbours and their neighbours supported them both emotionally and materially. These children also had at least one family member who has a good relationship with neighbours.

Based on the above analysis, I have argued that the approach of Garmezy (1995) and Werner (1989, 1992) in which protective factors and mechanisms that differentiate resilient and non-resilient children are conceptualized as operating at three broad levels: the child, family and community is relevant to the situation of poor children in Addis Ababa. However, the contents of each of these levels reflected the culture and context in which the children live, as Ungar (2005, 2008) and Boyden and Mann (2005) have emphasised. Finally, in line with Ungar's (2008) conceptualization of resilience, I conclude that the resilience of poor children in Addis Ababa depended on two processes that were shaped by the culture in which the children live. First, the extent to which children were able to behave and act in culturally acceptable ways (such as being obedient, respectful and patient), and have good relationships with their parents, older siblings, friends, peers and neighbours. Second, the extent to which these categories of people were able to provide these children with material and emotional support when the children behaved and acted in socially acceptable ways.

### **9.3. Empirical and Theoretical Implications**

The findings of my thesis suggest a number of empirical and theoretical implications, which I discuss below by dividing them into three areas: 'implications for child poverty research', 'implications for coping research' and 'implications for risk-and-resilience research'.

#### **9.3.1. Implications for child poverty research**

The findings of the thesis indicate that a sole focus on the negative impacts of material deprivation may obscure the positive experiences and agency of children in poverty, including their real priorities and concerns. The accounts of the children in this study suggest that for the majority of the children relationships that are characterized by conflict were more damaging to their sense of wellbeing than material disadvantage. Of course, the children's subjective accounts of risk might be affected by factors such as adaptation, lack of knowledge and limited horizons. However, as Clark (2007) notes, adaptation is not universal and most of the children in this urban setting had the opportunity to know about alternative life styles through TV programmes and movies. Hence, in order to understand the actual needs and concerns of children living in poverty and to respect their strengths and resilience, a more holistic approach such as the one provided by the concept of

‘wellbeing’ is needed. In recent years within international development and child poverty research in developing countries there has been a shift in focus from material to subjective and relational dimensions of poverty. Another valuable shift would be to take into account *culture* and *context* in any interpretation of risks to wellbeing.

### **9.3.2. Implications for coping research**

In this study, putting the children’s perspectives and experiences of coping and the efficacy of their coping strategies at the centre of the analysis process helped to examine the applicability of the dominant coping model (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) and categorization (Skinner et al., 2003) to a society that is very different from the one in which they were developed. More importantly, it also brought out a child-centred understanding of coping and coping efficacy. Hence, putting children’s perspectives and experiences at the centre of analysis could benefit coping research by increasing the sensitivity of models such as the Lazarus and Folkman’s process-oriented coping model to socio-cultural context (Wong et al, 2006) and “bringing the person back into coping measurement” (Weber and Laux, 1990: 37).

### **9.3.3. Implications for risk and resilience research**

Defining risk from the perspective of children highlighted differences in interpretations of risk from those of adults and the importance of the socio-cultural context in which these interpretations were situated. Developmental psychology, particularly the bulk of empirical and theoretical models of child risk that have been generated by Western research, could benefit theoretically from the incorporation of children’s perspectives both in terms of gaining a child-centred and culture/context-specific understanding of risk. As Liddell (2002: 112) argues, sensitivity to culture and context is especially important “if developmental psychologists are to achieve the same depth of understanding of risk for children of the developing world as has been achieved for children in other regions”.

With regard to resilience, the accounts of the children interviewed in this study indicate that their resilience depended on their access to protective factors, such as good relationships with parents, older siblings and friends, and that this in turn depended on how they behaved and acted in their interaction with these groups of people. The socio-cultural context the children live in also shaped what are considered as protective factors as well as how the children could access them. This means research on children’s resilience and

protective factors should be sensitive not only to socio-cultural context (Ungar, 2004; Boyden and Mann, 2005) but also to children's active role in the construction of their resilience.

#### **9.4. Some Implications for Child Poverty Policy and Practice**

A number of overarching themes emerged from the study, which has implications for child poverty policy and practice. Three of them - heterogeneity, context and resilience - are discussed below.

- ***Heterogeneity***: the findings of the study suggest that children living in poverty, like other children, are a heterogeneous group. They differ, among other things, in terms of what they perceive as risks for their wellbeing, their access to protective factors and resources, and their coping strategies. Hence, a simple, one-size-fits-all solution to child poverty (e.g. the international focus on 'education for all') would almost certainly miss out the real priorities and concerns of different children in poverty.
- ***Context***: the findings of the study suggest that socio-cultural context shapes the meaning of risks and the kind of coping strategies children choose to deal with these risks, as well the meaning of protective factors and children's access to them. Hence, attention must be given to the socio-cultural context that the children live in any intervention to improve the lives of children in poverty. For this reason, any approaches that are based on universalistic conceptions of children and childhood should be questioned.
- ***Resilience***: Understandably, a lot of attention in developing countries like Ethiopia has been given to poverty reduction (see, for example, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) in Ethiopia). Nevertheless, in reality, the task of alleviating poverty remains a challenge, and many children and their families in these countries are forced to deal with the negative consequences of living in poverty and other related risks on a daily basis. Hence, in such circumstances, it is pragmatic to give attention not only to how poverty could be alleviated, but also to the extent to which it is possible to build on the existing strategies of children and their families.

### 9.5. Areas for Future Research

The scope and limitations of this study bring forth some valuable and interesting possible areas for future research, as discussed below.

- a) ***Taking into account larger economic, social and political factors:*** based on the perspectives and experiences of poor children my study provided a rich and detailed account of risks, coping strategies and resilience. Nonetheless, I recognize that an emphasis on individual poor children's perspectives and experiences can overshadow larger economic, social and political factors (such as growing material inequality and the effects of ethnicity, disability or gender) that affect the lives of children living in poverty. The focus on individual children's responses can also divert the responsibility of poverty reduction from government and other concerned bodies to the children themselves, i.e. can "de-politicise" the task of poverty reduction (Boyden and Cooper, 2007). Future risk and resilience research may combine a child-centred approach with considerations of broader economic and socio-political factors that affect the lives of children in poverty.
- b) ***Combining the perspectives of children and adults who are important to them:*** A comprehensive and contextualized study of the lives of children living in poverty requires multiple perspectives, not only those of the children themselves. Hence, future research on risks, coping and resilience of poor children could combine the perspectives of children with the perspectives of people (such as parents/caregivers, siblings and peers) with whom the children interact on a regular basis.
- c) ***Comparing the perspectives and experiences of urban and rural children:*** my study was conducted in an urban context. Further research may be done in a rural context to explore differences between urban and rural children's perspectives and experiences of risks, coping and resilience.
- d) ***More qualitative studies:*** More qualitative studies on the role of culture in shaping children's interpretation and experiences of risks, coping and resilience are needed. The findings of this study suggest that the constructs of risk, coping and resilience are applicable to Ethiopian children (see the findings of the International Resilience Project, for their global application in Ungar, 2006, 2008) but how they are understood and

experienced by the children depended on the culture and context in which the children live.

## Note

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<sup>1</sup> The US and Somalia are the only countries belonging to the UN that have failed to ratify the convention, although the US has signed up to some of the clauses relating to child labour.

<sup>2</sup> During my undergraduate degree in History at Addis Ababa University, I wrote a BA thesis (Bethlehem, 2002) on life histories of three female commercial sex workers. I carried on that interest into an MA thesis in Social Anthropology (Bethlehem, 2005) focusing on the social lives of female sex workers in Addis Ababa.

<sup>3</sup> The Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) research programme was organised and coordinated by the University of Bath, UK and financed by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK, between 2002 and 2007. It was a four-country (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand) study. In Ethiopia, the WeD Research Program had six sites: two urban sites (Kofe in Addis Ababa and *Kebele* 08/09 in Shashemene), two sites in Oromia Region (Turufe Kecheme and Korodegaga) and two sites in Amhara Region (Yetemen and Denki).

<sup>4</sup> This refers to economically poor areas in the world regions of Africa, Asia, South America and the Pacific.

<sup>5</sup> This happens parallel to the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly in a non-academic context by some institutions, which give 'guidance' to parents on how, they can 'improve their children's resilience'.

<sup>7</sup> An earlier version of part of this chapter appeared in Bethlehem T et al. (2009).

<sup>8</sup> The lowest urban administrative unit in Ethiopia

<sup>9</sup> A district, made up of Kebeles, and an administrative unit

<sup>10</sup> A funeral association formed by individuals to help each other during the death of their members or the relative of their members

<sup>11</sup> The caregiver, an old woman, feared that I might end up adopting her only granddaughter. She said that in the past she saw individuals like me (who come from abroad) coming and adopting children in the area. She lost all her children because of HIV/AIDS and, she said, she does not want to be separated from the only surviving child she has, the granddaughter.

<sup>12</sup> There was overlap among the lists from Tesfa, Mary Joy and the Kebele so some of the children in the Kebele and Tesfa lists were also found in the Mary Joy list.

<sup>13</sup> The currency of Ethiopia (15 birr approximately = £1)

<sup>14</sup> Although, as I indicated earlier, I did not tell them that I am particularly interested in children living in poverty as part of my research aim was to explore what children living in poverty think and feel about their situation, concerns and priorities.

<sup>15</sup> Not used as a clinical term. The equivalent word in Amharic is *Debete* or *Debere*, which literally mean less active, low-spirited and this word is used in everyday communication.

<sup>16</sup> Sauce made with chicken

<sup>17</sup> This point also emerged in his timeline.

<sup>18</sup> Fermented flat bread made from a millet-like cereal, teff

<sup>19</sup> A family incorporates 'a variety of ways of coping that all serve the same functions in dealing with stress' (Skinner, 2006:247).

<sup>20</sup> The question was "before I ask you specific questions about your behaviour can you please tell me about your behaviour generally?"

<sup>21</sup> The students take turns to clean their classrooms after school hours once or twice a month.

<sup>22</sup> When a relative or close friend who lives in a rural area died, it is customary in Ethiopia for people to travel to his/her house to comfort the bereaved. They would stay there for several days depending on the closeness of the relative or friend.

<sup>23</sup> This is equivalent to the last year of primary school

<sup>24</sup> Government schools charge no fees for tuition, only for registration (approximately between 10 and 30 ETB per year) and school repairs

<sup>25</sup> This involves cleaning and sometimes repairing shoes. He charges 0.50 cents (£ 0.03) to clean a pair of shoes. On a good day he earns between 5 and 6 birr (£ 0.27- £ 0.32). Since he works on the street there is a

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risk of being abused by older children and street gangs who might snatch his money or steal his other possessions such as his shoeshine box. There is also a greater risk of a car accident.

<sup>26</sup> A *weyala* is a conductor who receives fares on a minibus taxi, which is one of the most important modes of transport in big cities like Addis Ababa. He also has the duty of informing potential passengers of the destination they are heading, informing the taxi driver to stop when a passenger wants to disembark, and generally keeping the law on board in the minibus taxi, which typically carry 11 passengers.

<sup>27</sup> Regular fasting is one of the customs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Every Wednesday and Friday is days of fasting and generally the faithful who are above the age of seven years are expected to fast over half the days in the year. During these fasting periods, the faithful do not eat breakfast and avoid all meat and milk products.

<sup>28</sup> An association of *Idirs* (burial association) which provides a multi-purpose support to poor children, youth and elderly people. It runs educational, skills training and HIV/AIDS prevention programs and provides credit services.

<sup>29</sup> A house rented out by a *Kebele* (the smallest administrative unit in urban Ethiopia) at affordable (below market) rent to the local population, similar to a council house in the UK.

<sup>30</sup> During the second phase of my fieldwork, Mulatu's mother got ill very frequently and sometimes took a bed for a very long period. She told me that she is diagnosed with Tuberculosis.

<sup>31</sup> Mulatu says his father finishes his work around 6 pm but often he comes home at 10 pm.

<sup>32</sup> The six themes were: "the time I was happy", "the time I was sad/unhappy", "the time I was angry", "the time I was worried most", "the time I was frightened most" and "my future hopes/plans"



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<sup>1</sup> Ethiopian names have been entered generally by first names rather than by father's name.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Checklist of Questions on the Social and Cultural Construction of Childhood in Kolfe Area**

#### **1. Checklist of questions for parents**

- Criterion/criteria to consider someone as a child
- How children are categorized in this area
- Age boys and girls start school in this area
- Age boys and girls in your household start school
- Age boys and girls start work (both domestic work and work outside the house)
- Age boys and girls in your household start work

#### **2. Checklist of questions for educators**

- Criterion/criteria to consider someone as a child
- How children are categorized in this area
- Should all boys go to school?
- If not should any boys go to school?
- If some - what kind of boy?
- Age boys start primary school
- Age boys finish primary school
- Should all girls go to school?
- If not should any girls go to primary school?
- If some - what kind of girl?
- Age girls start primary school
- Age girls finish primary school
- Purpose of secondary schools
- Should boys go to secondary school?
- Should girls go to secondary school?

#### **3. Checklist of questions for community leaders**

- Criterion/criteria to consider someone as a child
- How children are categorized in this area
- Age children start working for the family. Is it different for boys and girls?
- What work should boys do? (ask if this changes as they get older)
- What work should girls do? (ask if this changes as they get older)
- How do they learn the work skills? And from whom?
- How do they learn the discipline?
- How many hours should younger, middle and older working boys work per day/week?
- How many hours should younger, middle and older working girls work per day/week?
- What is the purpose of religious schools?
- What is the purpose of primary schools?

## **Appendix 2: Checklist of Questions for Individual Interviews with Children**

### **A. Checklist of questions for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of fieldwork**

#### **I. Biographical (factual) questions**

- Name
- Age
- Sex
- Educational status
- Where name is attending school (type of school)
- Place of origin
- Religion
- Type and size of household

#### **II. General question**

Tell me about yourself briefly.

#### **III. Topic specific questions**

##### **Checklist of topics**

##### **1. Social and Cultural Resources**

###### **▪ Family Life**

Can you please tell me about your relationship with each of your family members?

Checklist:

- What do you do with name? (Eating together, chatting, doing work together, etc)
- What makes name happy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes name unhappy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes you happy in your relationship with name?
- What makes you unhappy in your relationship with name?
- Have you ever quarrelled with name or got angry with him/her? What was the reason?  
What did you do about it?

###### **▪ Friends & Friendship**

How many friends do you have? Please tell me the name, age and educational level of each of your friends and then tell me about your relationship with each of them?

Checklist:

- What do you do with name?
- What do you like about name or what makes you happy in your relation with her/him?
- What do you dislike about name or what makes you unhappy in your relation with her/him?
- What makes name happy in his/her relation with you?
- What makes name unhappy in his/her relation with you?
- Tell me about the family of each of your friends (Are her/his parents alive? What do they do for living? How many siblings does s/he have?)
- Where does name live?
- Where does name attend school?
- Does name come to your house? How often? Do you go to name's house? How often?
- Have you ever quarrelled with name or got angry with him/her? What was the reason?  
What did you do about it?
- Who is your best friend? Why?

- **Neighbours**

Tell me about your relationship with people you are close with among your neighbours.

Checklist:

- What do you do with name? (Eating together, talking, doing work together, etc)
- What makes name happy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes name unhappy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes you happy in your relationship with name?
- What makes you unhappy in your relationship with name?
- Have you ever quarrelled with name or got angry with him/her? What was the reason? What did you do about it?

- **Kin/relatives**

Tell me about your relationship with people you are close with among your kin/relatives.

Checklist:

- What do you do with name? (Eating together, talking, doing work together, etc)
- What makes name happy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes name unhappy in his/her relationship with you?
- What makes you happy in your relationship with name?
- What makes you unhappy in your relationship with name?
- Have you ever quarrelled with name or got angry with him/her? What was the reason? What did you do about it?

- **Other social networks**

- Who is/are the most important individual/s in your life? Why?
- How do people in this area treat you?
- What do you like about people in this area?
- What do you dislike about people in this area?

- **Religion**

Tell me about your religion.

- How often do you go to church/mosque (depending on the religion of the child)?
- Does your religion have any significance in your life? Please can you explain to me?

## **2. Material Resources**

Tell me about the resources a child needs to 1) survive and 2) flourish.

Are you able to get the resources to survive? - Always, sometimes, never, seasonally- if so from where?

Are you able to get the resources to flourish? - Always, sometimes, never, seasonally- if so from where?

- **Resources for recreation**

- What do you need to have fun?
- Are you able to get the resources you have just mentioned? - If so from where?

- **Resources for school**

- What kind of resources do you need for school?
- Are you able to get the resources you have just mentioned? - If so from where?

- **Housing condition and possessions**

- How many rooms does your house have? *Also write your observation about the size of the room/s, type of floor, type of house, materials in the house*
- Does your house have a toilet? What kind of toilet? Please can you describe it for me? Is it clean? Is it suitable for children of your age?

- Does your house have pipe water? If the answer is no ask from where they get water.
- Is your house a Kebele house or rented from individuals?
  - **Closing and shoes**
- Do you have enough cloth?
- Do you have enough shoes?
- Who buy you cloth and shoes?
- When do they buy you and how often?
- Do you ask them to buy you cloth/shoes or do they buy you without you asking them?
- What do you do or say if they don't buy you cloth/shoes on time?
  - **Sleeping space and situation**
- Where do you sleep?
- With whom do you sleep?
- Are you happy or satisfied with your sleeping space and situation?
  - **Food**

How many times do you eat per day? What kind of food do you often eat?

Checklist:

- Do you always eat your breakfast? *If the answer is no, ask the reason and what does s/he do about it?*
- What do you often have for breakfast?
- When does this change?
- Do you always eat your lunch? *If the answer is no, ask the reason and what does s/he do about it?*
- What do you often have for lunch?
- When does this change?
- Do you always eat your dinner? *If the answer is no, ask the reason and what does s/he do about it?*
- What do you often have for dinner?
- When does this change?

- **Sanitation**

- How often do you wash your body? Hair?
- How often do you wash your cloth?

*Also observe about the hygiene of the child, the house, the environment.*

- **Income/Financial situation of the household**

- How many individuals in this household work for income?
- Where do they work?
- How much do they get (monthly or daily)?
- Do they contribute to the household? In what ways?
- What other sources of income does the household have?
- Do you share the income of the household? In what ways?

### 3. Human Resources

- **Health (physical and mental health)**

Tell me about your health condition.

Checklist:

- Did you face any problem in relation to your health? What were the problems? What did you do about it?
- Are there any problems now? Are you getting treatment? If not why not?

▪ **Personal attributes and behaviour**

Tell me about your behaviour. *Please follow interesting responses*

Checklist:

*Ask the child about her/his behaviour in relation to the following:*

**Competence**

- Managing self
- Being helpful
- Working hard
- Skill
- Confidence
- Intelligence

**Autonomy**

- Being active
- Obedience
- Knowing own mind
- Being argumentative

**Relations**

- Being outgoing
- Being bossy
- Being a bully
- Having a lot of girl friends
- Having a lot of boy friends
- Being quarrelsome

**Meaning**

- Being contemplative
- Being imaginative
- Being religious
- Being happy (what makes you happy?)
- Being sad (what makes you unhappy?)
- Being expressive

**Personality**

- Aggressiveness
- Being responsible
- Calmness
- Depression

Tell me about any aspects of your current behaviour or experience that worries you and/or your parents or other adults.

What is good/bad behaviour for you? Are you rewarded for good behaviour? – By whom?

What reward? Are you punished for bad behaviour – by whom? What punishment?

▪ **Recreation**

- What do you do to have fun?
- With whom do you play?
- For how many hours do you play per day?
- Where do you play?
- What stops you from playing?

- **Work**

- Do you work (ask about both work inside and outside of home)?
- What kind of work?
- For how many hours per day?
- With whom do you work?
- What do you get in return?

- **Education**

Tell me about your education (can be both formal and informal education)

- Performance
- Discipline
- Relation with teachers
- Relation with classmates

#### **4. Environmental Resources**

- What do you like about the area you live in?
- What do you dislike about the area you live in?
- Is the area you live in safe for children?
- Is the water people drink around here good, bad or average?
- Is the air people breathe around here good, bad or average?

#### **5. Specific questions regarding the Perceptions of Children about their life condition**

Today, we are going to talk about your perception in relation to different aspects of your life. First, I will ask you about children of your age in general and then we will talk about you.

- What kind of life does children of your age here aspires to have?
- What kind of life do you aspire to have?
- Comparing with your aspired state of life, how do you judge your present life conditions? Which aspects are better or worse?
- What do you think children of your age need to be *happy* in their life?
- Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned?
- Are you happy with your life (*with what you have, do and feel*)? Why?
- What do you think children of your age need to be *successful* in their life (at school, work, in their relation with people)?
- Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned?
- What do you think children of your age need to have a *good life*?
- Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned?

#### **Checklist:**

##### ***Social resources:***

- What are the *characteristics of a good family*?
- Does your family have the characteristics you have just mentioned?
- What are the *characteristics of a good parent/carer*?
- Do your parents/carers have the characteristics you have just mentioned? (Ask about her/his mother and father separately).
- What are the *characteristics of a good sibling*?



- Do your siblings have the characteristics you have just mentioned? (Ask about each of her/his siblings).
- What are the *characteristics of a good friend*? (Ask about her/his friends at school, who live in the same area and work together).
- Do your friends have the characteristics you have just mentioned? (Ask about each of her/his friends).
- What are the *characteristics of a good neighbour*?
- Do your neighbours have these characteristics? (Ask about each of her/his neighbours).
- What are the *characteristics of a good relative*?
- Do your relatives have these characteristics? (Ask about each of her/his relatives).

***Material resources:***

- In your opinion, what are the *characteristics of a good house*?
- Does your house have the characteristics you have just mentioned?
- What are the *characteristics of a good residential area*?
- Does your residential area have the characteristics you have just mentioned?
- What are the *characteristics of a good school*? (Please mention teachers, students, Library, other school materials like desk, blackboard, school schedule, location of school, type of school- government/private/religious etc)
- Are you able to get the things you have just mentioned?
- What are the *characteristics of a good country*?
- Do you think Ethiopia has the characteristics you have just mentioned?

***History***

Tell me about your past:-

- happy memories
- unhappy memories
- most significant achievements
- greatest problems

***Now and the future***

- Tell me about what is most important in your life now.
- Tell me about the main worries you have- current and potential risks and/or problems.
- Tell me about the main hopes that you have- current and potential achievements.

**B. Checklist of questions for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of fieldwork**

**I. Changes and continuities**

1. What things/issues have changed since I saw you last year? What were the reasons?
2. What things/issues have continued/not changed since I saw you last year? What were the reasons?

**Checklist:**

▪ **Social and Cultural Resources**

What things/issues have changed and continued in terms of:

- Your relationships with each of your family members;
- Friends
- Peers

- Neighbours
- Kin/relatives
- Other social networks
- Religion

- **Material Resources**

What things/issues have changed and continued in terms of:

- Resources for recreation
- Resources for school
- Housing condition and possessions
- Clothing and shoes
- Sleeping space and situation
- Food
- Sanitation
- Income/Financial situation of the household

- **Human Resources**

- Health
- Personal attributes and behaviour
- Recreation
- Work
- Education

- **Environmental Resources**

- Residential area
- Access to safe water
- Air/pollution
- Safety

## **II. Questions taken from "The Youth Interview Guide" (International Resilience Project)**

- What would I need to know to grow up well here?
- What would I need to know to grow up happily here?
- How do you describe people [children] who grow up well here despite the many problems they face? What word(s) do you use?"
- What does it mean to you, to your family, and to your community, when bad things happen?"

### **Probing Questions:**

- Can you tell me what some of these bad things are?
- What do you do to cope?
- What do your family do to cope?
- What do your community do to cope?
- What kinds of things are most challenging for you growing up here?

### **Probing Questions:**

- Are there opportunities for age-appropriate work?
- Are you or people you know exposed to violence? How do you avoid this in your family, community, and when with peers?

- How does the government play a role in providing for your safety, your recreation needs and housing?
- Do you feel safe and secure here? How do others protect you?
- Do you feel equal to others? Are there others you do not feel equal to? How do these others make you feel? What do they do that makes you feel this way?
- Do you have access to school and education and any other information you need to grow up well? How do you get this access? Who provides it to you?
- What do you do when you face difficulties in your life?
- What does being healthy mean to you and others in your family and community?

**Probing Questions:**

- Could you describe the way your parents or caregivers look after you?
- How does your family express themselves and what they think of you?
- How does your family monitor you, keep track of what you are doing?
- How do you know how to act with other people? How well do you do socially? Are you thought of well by others, popular, liked?
- Do you have someone whom you consider as a mentor or role model? Can you describe them?
- Do you have other meaningful relationships with people at school, home, or in your community?
- What do you do, and others you know do, to keep healthy, mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually?

**Probing Questions:**

- Are you assertive? How do you show this?
- Can you describe your ability to problem-solve? Are you better or worse than others? How do you know this?
- Do you have a sense of control over your world? How does this affect your life?
- How much uncertainty are you able to live with?
- Do you value self-awareness, insight? How does this affect your life and what you do day to day?
- Would you describe yourself as optimistic or pessimistic about life?
- Do you have personal goals and aspirations? What are these?
- How much can you be independent and how much do you have to rely on others in your life for your survival?
- Can you share with me a story about another child who grew up well in this community despite facing many challenges?
- Can you share a story about how you have managed to overcome challenges you face personally, in your family, or outside your home in your community?

### **III. Going 'deep'**

▪ **Friends and friendships**

- Do you have friends who will stand by you during difficult times? Who are they? Why do you choose them? Please explain to me?
- Do you do the same for these friends?
- Are you happy with your friends? Why? Please explain to me?
- Do your friends always want to be with you? How do they feel about being with you? Why?

- Do you always want to be with your friends? How do you feel about being with them? Why?
- Do you talk to your friends about how you feel? Who do you talk with? Always? Sometimes?
- Do your friends talk to you about how they feel? Who are they? Always? Sometimes?
- What do you think is your friends' view about you? (e.g. do they consider you respectful, intelligent, obedient etc)
- What is your view about them?
- What is difficult concerning your friends?
- Do you feel safe when you are with your friends?
- **Family members**
  - Among your family members with who are you close with? Why?
  - Do you talk to your family about how you feel? Who do you talk with? Why do you choose her/him?
  - How much support do you get from your family? Please tell me in relation to each of your family members?
  - To what extent your family follows up your daily activities?
  - Do you feel that your parent(s) know a lot about you?
  - Do you think your family will always stand by you during difficult times?
  - Do you feel safe when you are with your family?
- **Peers**
  - What does 'children in the neighbourhood' mean? Who does it include?
  - What is the advantage and disadvantage of having a peer group?
  - What would one need to know to get along with children in the neighbourhood? Generally with peers?
  - What is difficult regarding peers?
  - What do you do when you face difficulties regarding your peers?
  - Do 'children in the neighbourhood' support each other? To what extent, please explain to me?
  - What makes you happy in your relationship with your peer group?
  - What makes you unhappy in your relationship with your peer group?
  - What do you think is your peers' view about you?
  - Do you feel safe when you are with your peer group?

### **Appendix 3: the timeline of Mulatu**

Themes	Year and happening
<b>‘I was born’</b>	1986 EC
<b>‘The time I was happy’</b>	1993: when my maternal grandfather taught me how to make cloth; when I joined school for the first time 1994: when my parents made peace with each other with the help of traditional mediators; when I found 10 birr on the street 1995: the day I spent the night at my aunt’s place when my parents went to a rural area. 1997: when my mother came home from a hospital after she recovered from tuberculosis; when my friend (Samson) and I met for the first time; when I was allocated a class at the top part of the school building; the day I was able to sell items [in front of our house] without the presence [and help] of my mother 1998: I was happy to meet my relatives when they came for my little brother’s bereavement; when I reconciled my parents 1999 (this year): I am happy for going to summer school with my friend and for being allocated to same school with him by the government ; for being bought new cloth for the New Year by my father; for being able to celebrate the Ethiopian Millennium
<b>‘The time I was sad/unhappy’</b>	I can’t remember the year: I was sad the day I was bitten when I was at a pre-school I can’t remember the year: I was sad because I could not see my paternal grandfather before he died 1997: when my maternal grandfather died 1998: when my little brother died; when my father did not manage to take me to a rural area to visit his relatives for the first time
<b>‘The time I was angry’</b>	None
<b>‘The time I was worried most’</b>	1994: I was very worried when my mother and father fought and when my father decided to take me to his relatives’ house in a rural area. 1998: when my mother and father fought
<b>‘The time I was frightened most’</b>	None
<b>‘My future hopes/plans’</b>	2000: to go to a rural area with my father to visit his relatives 2004: to finish school and join college 2008: to star working as an engineer and help my family

### **Appendix 4: the timeline of Endalk**

Themes	Year and happening
<b>‘I was born’</b>	1985 E.C.
<b>‘The time I was happy’</b>	1992: when I joined school 1995: when I went to one of my older brother’s place to live with him 1998: After living for two years with my oldest brother, I returned home. I was happy because he used to hit me a lot. 1999 (this year): when I went to live with my oldest brother again. It is good for my education.
<b>‘The time I was sad/unhappy’</b>	1993: when my father was sick when he came home and he is paralyzed since then. 1997: when my oldest sister went to an Arab country [to work as a housemaid].
<b>‘The time I was angry’</b>	1999 (this year): when the government decided to upgrade my school (Kolfe elementary school) to a high school. Reason: I like the school; I am separated from most of my friends
<b>‘The time I was worried most’</b>	1992: my father was drunk when he came home and fought with my mother. She told to the police and he was imprisoned for three days. 1993: Again, my father disturbed the house, fought with my mother and he was imprisoned for two days; this year another day, he was also imprisoned for disturbing the house for 24 hours. 1999 (this year): my mother and father fought
<b>‘The time I was frightened most’</b>	1990: when my father’s donkeys were eaten by a hyena 1997: During the disturbance [that followed the May election], I saw a dead body in front of our house. I was very frightened because that was the first time I saw a dead body.
<b>‘My future hopes/plans’</b>	2000: to study hard 2004: When I finish school, I want to be a football player.

## **Appendix 5: the timeline of Mamitu**

Themes	Year and happening
<b>‘I was born’</b>	1985 EC
<b>‘The time I was happy’</b>	1997: My friend and I got good business at our work place and we were very happy 1998: When my one of my friends’ sister got married 1999: When my sister and cousin go to Syria and Bruit respectively [to work as a housemaid]
<b>‘The time I was sad/unhappy’</b>	1989: The time when one of my close peers died 1991: When one of my maternal aunts died 1999: When one of my close cousins died; when Mekdes (one of my friends) left to live in a rural area; when one of our neighbours died
<b>‘The time I was angry’</b>	None
<b>‘The time I was worried most’</b>	1996: My father was drunk. He came home and fought with my mother. He also fought with my older brother and he chased my brother out of the house. My brother started to live with my maternal grandmother.
<b>‘The time I was frightened most’</b>	1998: The time when people in our compound were troubled by a thief and in those days I was frightened to even go to the shop
<b>‘My future hopes/plans’</b>	2000: To start another work such as to be hired at a private shop; to continue to support my family and my education Unknown year: After I get a job to get married, work is important because even when there is conflict at home [with my husband] I can support my children by myself. Unknown year: to be a medical doctor

## **Appendix 6: the timeline of Hezera**

Themes	Year and happening
<b>‘I was born’</b>	1986 EC
<b>‘The time I was happy’</b>	1998: I went to a rural area to visit my relatives. I was very happy; I socialized with children at school before that I did not know them well. I was happy. 1999: I came to know that my friends and I would not be separated. We are allocated to same school [the government upgraded their school into a secondary school and distributed its students into different primary schools] 2000: I hope that my friends and I will enjoy the new school; going and coming to school together and borrowing each other’s books
<b>‘The time I was sad/unhappy’</b>	1994: At this time, I could not go out of the house. If I did, my uncles would hit me. I was very sad 1996: Because of one child (who spread gossips), I quarrelled with all my friends and I was alone the whole year. I was very sad. 1997: It was A Christmas day and I was preparing to make a Christmas tree but then my grand mother got ill. Because of that I spent the day very sadly 1998: My grand mother died on a Christmas day [just a year after she got ill]. I was very sad.
<b>‘The time I was angry’</b>	1995: I used to get support from Mary Joy [non-governmental organization working on orphan children]. They refused to give me support saying that I am getting support from Tesfa [another organization working on orphan and poor children]. I was very angry
<b>‘The time I was worried most’</b>	None
<b>‘The time I was frightened most’</b>	1990: I was 4 years old. I was scared to go home because I accidentally caused an injury on a child while we were playing
<b>‘My future hopes/plans’</b>	Unknown year: I hope to join college and be a [Medical] doctor